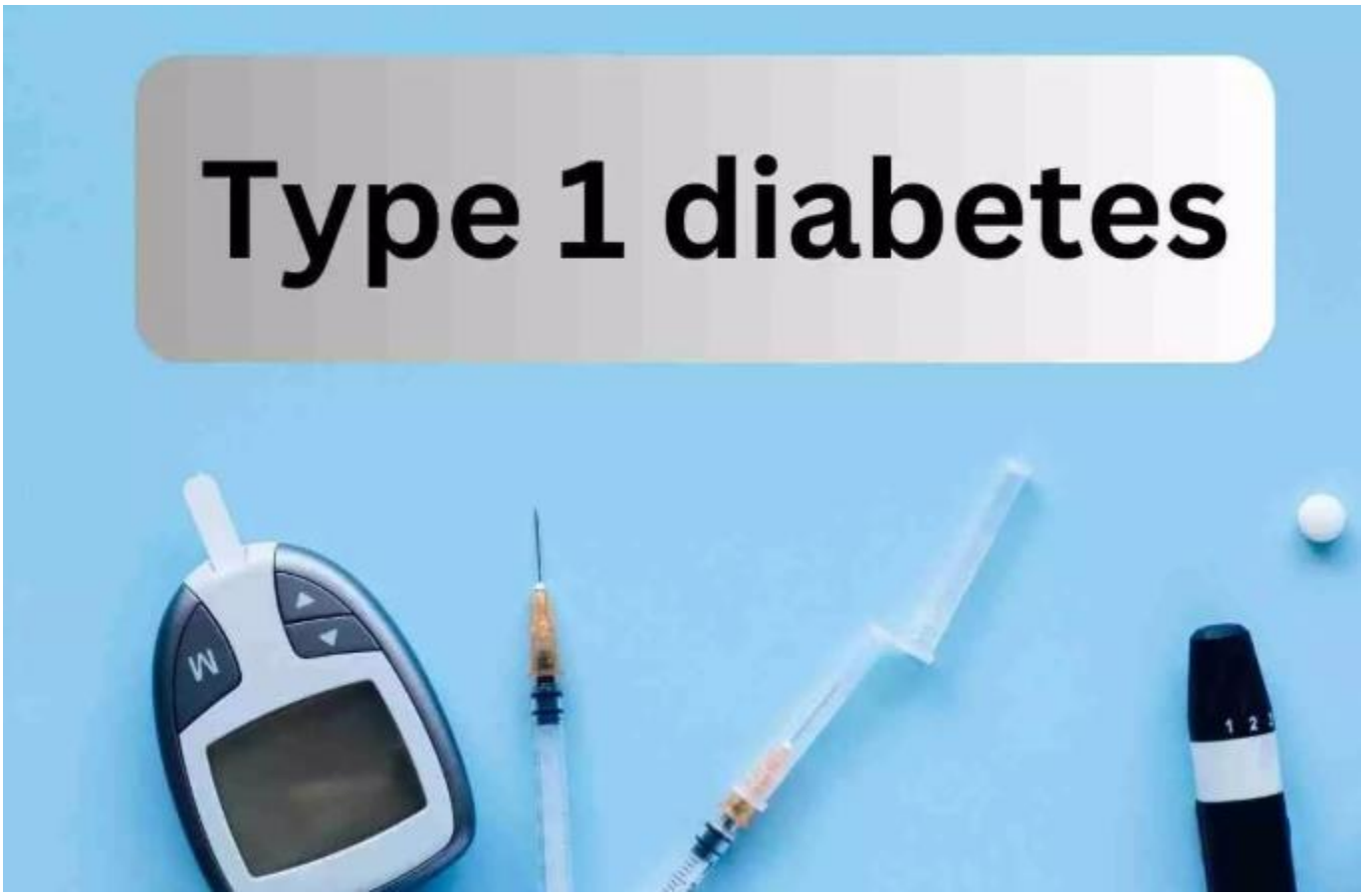
WHO issues first guidelines on type 1diabetes for adults



More than 100 years after the discovery of insulin, many people living with type 1 diabetes still cannot access the insulin and care they need to survive. Type 1 diabetes is a lifelong condition in which the body does not produce enough insulin, making people dependent on daily insulin to survive.

Marking World Diabetes Day 2026, the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued its first guidelines on the diagnosis and management of type 1 diabetes in adults, with recommendations designed to apply across all settings, including low-resource, emergency and humanitarian settings.

In 2025, around 9.5 million people lived with type 1 diabetes globally, with an additional 500 000 diagnosed in the same year. While often considered primarily a childhood condition, type 1 diabetes is increasingly affecting adults.

“Insulin is a lifesaving treatment, discovered more than 100 years ago. Yet many people with type 1 diabetes do not have access to affordable and high-quality insulin,” said Dr Søren Brostrøm, WHO Director of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. “The new WHO guidelines provide evidence-based recommendations to help countries deliver the best possible care, including in settings where resources are limited and health services are disrupted.”

In the new guidelines, WHO recommends that people with type 1 diabetes receive insulin injections several times per day, with doses adjusted to blood glucose levels. Human insulin, a manufactured medicine that works like insulin naturally produced by the human body, is an appropriate and effective option. Other types of insulin can be used when needed.

The guidelines recommend regular monitoring of blood glucose levels. At clinics, this can include a regular blood test that shows average blood sugar levels over the past few months. At home, people can check their own levels with a finger prick test or a continuous glucose monitor, through a small sensor worn on the skin. Where blood glucose testing is not available, urine glucose testing can be considered.

The new guidelines support efforts to achieve WHO targets to ensure that all people with type 1 diabetes have access to affordable insulin treatment and blood glucose self-monitoring by 2030.

WHO will help countries turn these recommendations into actions by providing practical tools and guidance to track progress. Countries are also encouraged to actively involve people with type 1 diabetes in designing, implementing and evaluating diabetes programmes.

The 2026 World Diabetes Day focuses on "Early action on diabetes". Diabetes can lead to serious complications, including blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke, and lower-limb amputation. The global burden of diabetes has more than quadrupled since 1990. In 2022, 830 million people were living with diabetes worldwide, the majority with type 2 diabetes. More than 40% of people with diabetes are unaware that they have the condition and therefore remain undiagnosed.

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