

# Diabetes: DO or DIE

**Don't miss out on  
Diabetes Awareness  
Month in November**

**BY LAURA DURHAM**

**November is Diabetes Awareness Month and as your customers become more aware of the implications of an unhealthy lifestyle, they need to know that your store is the place to go for all their health and diabetic needs all year round.**

## Diabetes for dummies

Diabetes occurs when there is a chronic excess of glucose/sugar in the bloodstream, causing damage to organs of the body, e.g. eyes, kidneys, cardiovascular system, nervous system. There are 3 main types of diabetes, explains Nativa's nutritionist, Rachelle Pretorius.

- Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas stops secreting insulin therefore causing high blood glucose/sugar levels. This type of diabetes mainly occurs in children and is mainly due to an auto-immune condition whereby the pancreas stops secreting insulin. This type of diabetes is unavoidable at the moment.
- Type 2 diabetes occurs when the pancreas secretes too little insulin and at the same time, when the body is unable to absorb the amount of insulin produced, resulting in high blood glucose/sugar values. Type 2 diabetes occurs due to family history as well as unhealthy lifestyles and can be avoided in many instances.



*As part of Diabetes Awareness Month in November, create a department that is dedicated to healthy, fresh, low in fat, low in sugar, low and intermediate GI foods.*

- Gestational diabetes occurs during pregnancy due to hormonal changes and in most instances when the woman gives birth, she will revert back to normal blood glucose/sugar values. It is important to know that this is a risk factor for future type 2 diabetes and therefore the mother should test her blood sugar regularly thereafter.

The knowledge of the type of food people need to eat when diabetic has increased during the last couple of years. However, diabetes nurse educator, Razana Allie from Diabetes South Africa, says this awareness needs to increase further. "Despite the knowledge and awareness, the prevalence of diabetes has also been growing due to the number of people who are adopting a Western diet (higher fat and fewer fruits and vegetables). These habits lead to obesity, which may increase the risk of diabetes type 2," she says.

Awareness on types of diets to prevent diabetes should also receive more attention.

## Lifestyle change

South Africans wanting to avoid or reverse diabetes type 2 should exercise more, shed kilograms if overweight, cut out refined food and sugar and pursue a diet comprising whole foods and lean protein. This is the message from Dr Geert Verhelst, one of Europe's leading holistic practitioners on preventing and treating diabetes type 2.

"Go back to basics – eat unprocessed, whole foods and whole grains. Eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit and choose fish and lean protein. Avoid sugar. Even fruit juices contain high levels of fructose. And, move more! Exercise daily and if you are overweight, lose those extra kilograms," he advises.

"It is important to realise that diabetes is a progressive, lifelong condition which can be managed effectively. People living with diabetes can live a long healthier good quality life if they understand their condition and manage it appropriately," says Allie.

Most importantly, people living with diabetes should take charge of their lives because there is currently no cure for diabetes, but the complications of the condition can be reduced.

## Health opportunity

"In general, people are increasingly health conscious, especially as we head into spring. Women's magazines also do a lot to promote a healthier way of living as a way of life," says Angela Leitch, sales and marketing director at Thistlewood Products.

"Healthy living has become the norm and hotels, airlines and most recently, supermarkets, have cottoned on to this," she adds.

An increasing range of health products is particularly evident in stores that cater for a high end customer base, as well as Dis-Chem, which has an extensive health foods department. ▶

## DIABETES FOOD FOCUS ▶



Diabetes  
South Africa

On 3 August the GIFSA and Diabetes SA endorsement logos have been officially approved by the Department of Health (DoH) in accordance with the new labelling regulations, R146, which come into being early next year.

However, stores still seem to have quite a limited range of health products – and even fewer products that are geared towards diabetics. This forces diabetics to go to specialised health shops for their dietary requirements.

"Diabetic products also tend to be very bland – and double the price," says Leitch.

Thistlewood Products has recently launched a range of products that have a low Glycemic Index (GI) and are diabetic friendly. These include a select range of Low GI jams, fruit toppings, toasted muesli and biscuits. "With all the sweetness but without the guilt," she adds.

Nativa also has a range of diabetic products in its health stable, including: Nativa Diabetic Complex, Replace Diabetic Meal Replacement Shake, Lifegain, Lifegain Sport, TurboKidz Soy (Kids Supplement Shake), New You Burn Stimulant Free, and

New You Shake-it! Weight Management shakes.

"I believe that there are certain super-market stores which really have a large amount of goodies for people with diabetes, however, they tend to be expensive and not affordable to the lower income earners," Diabetes SA's Razana Allie.

The number of health products available on our shelves has increased substantially over the last 10 years, but there is definitely room for improvement, comments Jan Delpont, head of marketing and endorsements at the GI Foundation of South Africa. He said that categories that have shown a lot of growth in the health,



Categories that have shown a lot of growth in the health, low GI and diabetic-friendly products are bread and bakery products, dairy products and meal replacement snacks and shakes.

# The taste of good health the whole family will enjoy

## Life for persons with diabetes and those seeking a healthier snack and tea time option has just got easier

Our scientifically developed low GI biscuits are packed with real Cranberry, Mixed Berry or Apricot bits.

Energy controlled, they have no artificial flavours or colourants and the hint of natural sweetness makes them the perfect snack. Your customers on a quest to lose weight, control blood sugar and improve overall health, stamina and lower cholesterol will love them. So will the whole family. They will also love the gift style bag with labelling in accordance with the new legislation.



Suitable for diabetics. These new biscuits are the latest additions to the Thistlewoods Low GI range.



Pack size  
225g x 12

Other products in the range include: Jams, Fruit Toppings and Toasted Muesli.



Trade enquiries call  
Patleys on 011 226 8800

Thistlewood Products call 033 386 3636

low GI and diabetic-friendly products are bread and bakery products, dairy products and meal replacement snacks and shakes.

"There has been some growth in products geared towards diabetics but we still lack disclosure of contents and measurements," says Allie. "But I understand that soon, by law, we will see these on the packaging," she adds.

### Tick of approval

The new food labelling regulations, R146, which will come into effect March 2012 may hamper the marketing and promotion of diabetic-friendly products. "Therefore manufacturers and retailers should strategically create awareness towards diabetic-friendly products on their shelves," she says.

"Manufacturers of diabetic friendly food should focus on the blood glucose control abilities of low GI food, as well as creating feasible portion sizes. Education on diabetes and the type of products may play an important role in creating diabetic-friendly products in the supermarkets," she says.

On 3 August the GIFSA and Diabetes SA endorsement logos have been officially



*Generally, supermarkets still seem to have quite a limited range of health products – and even fewer products that are geared towards diabetics. This forces diabetics to go to specialised health shops for their dietary requirements.*

*Help customers make the right choices in-store by broadening your recipe book range in-store to include ones with a health and diabetic focus.*



approved by the Department of Health (DoH). The new labelling regulations, R146, require all food endorsement logos to get approval from the DoH.

"As the administrator of this endorsement programme, GIFSA is delighted and honoured," says Delpont.

"This approval enables the GI Foundation to carry on with its work and this should facilitate the development of numerous low GI, lower fat, food products that would enable the South African consumer to make easier healthy choices when they go grocery shopping."

The GIFSA logos consist of four different logos that simplify a healthy food choice for the consumer. One of the conditions specified for the continuation of the programme is that the logos must be void of any health claims. GIFSA anticipated this requirement and has altered the logos to fall in line. "They are the only foodstuff endorsement logos that assess the blood of glucose impact of a foodstuff, which is specifically important for the prevention of lifestyle diseases, as well as diseases like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, etc," he explains.

The new logos are to be used as soon as possible and definitely not later than March 2012.

"Those products that display the endorsement logos have an advantage in the market place. We want to invite new companies with health-oriented products to contact us about possible endorsements of their products. In a time when any health claim on your label is a risk, using the GIFSA and/or Diabetes SA logo is an excellent way to differentiate a healthy food product from the rest," says Delpont.

"It's all about stimulating the market to producing healthy alternatives to existing

## Diabetes facts and figures

- 346 million people worldwide have diabetes
- In 2004, an estimated 3.4 million people died from consequences of high blood sugar
- More than 80% of diabetes deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries
- WHO projects that diabetes deaths will double between 2005 and 2030
- Type 1 diabetes (previously known as insulin-dependent, juvenile or childhood-onset) requires daily administration of insulin and the cause is not known or preventable with current knowledge
- Type 2 diabetes (formerly called non-insulin-dependent or adult-onset) results from the body's ineffective use of insulin and is largely the result of excess body weight and physical inactivity
- Type 2 diabetes comprises 90% of people with diabetes around the world
- Over time, diabetes can damage the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves
- Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease and stroke – 50% of people with diabetes die of cardiovascular disease
- Healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight and avoiding tobacco use can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.

*Compiled from Diabetes Fact sheet no. 312, August 2011, World Health Organization*

products, and educating consumers into making healthy choices when they are at the supermarket," he adds.

### Diabetic-friendly supermarket

"Generally supermarkets don't cater for diabetics but health sections are growing," comments Leitch. She says that generally, buyers don't quite realise what an opportunity health, and particularly, diabetic products can be for a store. Surprisingly, the growth of the health food category is very slow – especially compared to international counterparts. ▶

## DIABETES FOOD FOCUS ▶

Leitch suggests that retailers create a dedicated health section in-store to guide customers. "Especially for diabetics, who tend to be older, it would make the shopping trip much less exhausting," she adds. Allie, on the other hand, believes that creating a dedicated section for diabetic products will result in discrimination. "What can be done though, is that retailers stock the varieties of foodstuffs relevant to people living with diabetes," she suggests. For example, yoghurt – not all stores stock the appropriate yoghurt for people with diabetes and there is a constant battle for low fat cheddar cheese.

Allie adds that stores can partner with the South African Diabetes Association or other professional health associations to create awareness in store and improve offerings. "With new food regulations and no disease claims allowed, offering a department solely dedicated to diabetes may be difficult, there can however be a department created in store dedicated to healthy, fresh, low in fat, low in sugar, low and intermediate GI foods."

She says it is also important to realise that blood glucose control can still be



*South Africans wanting to avoid or reverse diabetes type 2 should exercise more, shed kilograms if overweight, cut out refined food and sugar and pursue a diet comprising whole foods and lean protein.*


achieved with most ordinary food products. Understanding the food type and knowing how it affects your blood sugar is what makes a difference.

### Diabetes Awareness Month

November is a huge opportunity for retailers to educate their customers about diabetes and showcase the products available in-store. Some promotion ideas include:

- Hand out educational pamphlets
- Give known customers with diabetes a small hamper of products

- Bring in a dietician to lead groups through stores to show them diabetic-friendly foods and be available to answer questions.
- Hand out recipes with healthier options
- Broaden your recipe book range in-store to include ones with a health and diabetic focus.

"Retailers should make a fuss of Diabetes Awareness Month, and especially World Diabetes Day on 14 November, to build customer loyalty and show customers that they care and cater for their lifestyle needs," says Leitch. 



## Effective TRAINING today for a competitive ADVANTAGE tomorrow

### A tailor-made approach.

We provide flexibility in scheduling, delivery and contextualisation of qualifications according to your company's needs.

Qualifications in Adult Education Training, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Marketing, Skills Development, Wholesale Distribution, Wholesale Operations and Management.



086 005 3276



[www.olg.co.za](http://www.olg.co.za)



011 670 4850



[www.facebook.com/olgfb](http://www.facebook.com/olgfb)



<http://twitter.com/OpenLGroup>

Open Learning Group (Pty) Ltd – Reg No: 1997/020392/07, a subsidiary of Open Learning Holdings (Pty) Ltd – Reg No: 1998/009375/07

Provisionally registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training until 31 December 2012 as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997 – Provisional Registration Certificate No: 2009/ HE07/005.

Provisionally registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training until 31 December 2015 as a private further education and training college in terms of Section 31/(3) of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006. Provisional Registration No: 2009/ FE07/101.