Close to 350 million people in the world have diabetes, and the prevalence is rising rapidly, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. There is much all of us can do to minimize our risk of getting the disease and, even if we do get it, to live long and healthy lives with it.

People who have diabetes lose their ability to properly regulate their blood sugar. Out-of-control blood sugar can lead to nerve damage, heart attack, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and lower-limb amputation.

Most people with diabetes have a form of the illness – type 2 – that disproportionately strikes people who are overweight and sedentary. This means that the steps we take to steer clear of type 2 diabetes are the same steps we can take to maintain good health.

“Steps” is the right word. Anyone who can stand instead of sit, walks a little bit more each day and generally be more active, should do so.

Diabetes also affects our wallets. Many who suffer complications lose their incomes because they cannot work. Moreover, treatment can be expensive. Insulin is unaffordable for many people in low- and middle-income countries, where most people with diabetes live. Even in high-income countries the cost has increased in recent years beyond the reach of many. For those people who produce none of their own insulin -- as in type 1 of the disease -- going without insulin is a death sentence.

Just as individuals must take steps to live healthy lives, so can Governments create enabling environments. Health facilities can expand care for diabetes. The private sector can improve the availability and affordability of healthier products and essential medicines.

The world recently took a major step in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and incorporating a target to reduce by one-third the deaths attributed to non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, by 2030.

On World Diabetes Day, let us recognize the progress we have made, but let us also acknowledge that it is not yet enough. Let us all step up to limit the impact of diabetes.