



# BADRI

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## The Vitals

30 - June 2023

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***Cure sometimes, treat often,  
comfort always.***

-Hippocrates

## Medical Newsletter

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## TOPIC 1: INTERNATIONAL THALASSEMIA DAY

Celebrated on the 8th of May, International Thalassemia Day is observed to increase thalassemia awareness, highlight patients' ongoing struggles, remember the lives lost, and reaffirm the commitment to fight until a cure is found.

The main key points for observing thalassemia day are:

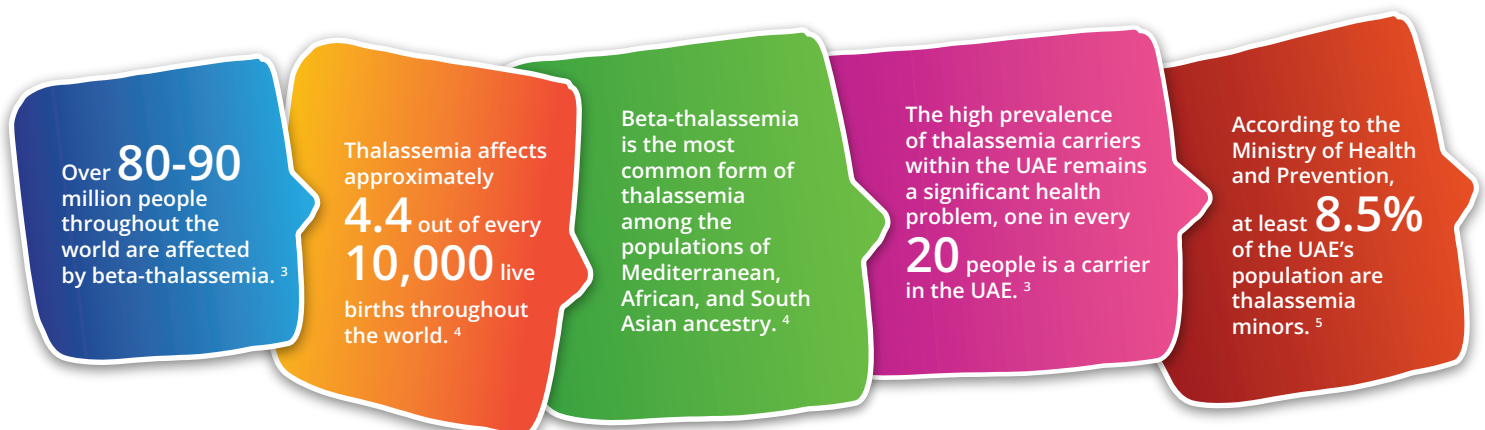
- *To raise awareness about the disease, its symptoms, and ways to live with it.*
- *To raise awareness about consultation with a doctor before marriage*
- *To raise awareness about the importance of vaccination for children's health, society, and the whole world.*
- *Promoting and enhancing medical research in the field of thalassemia care and prevention.*<sup>1</sup>

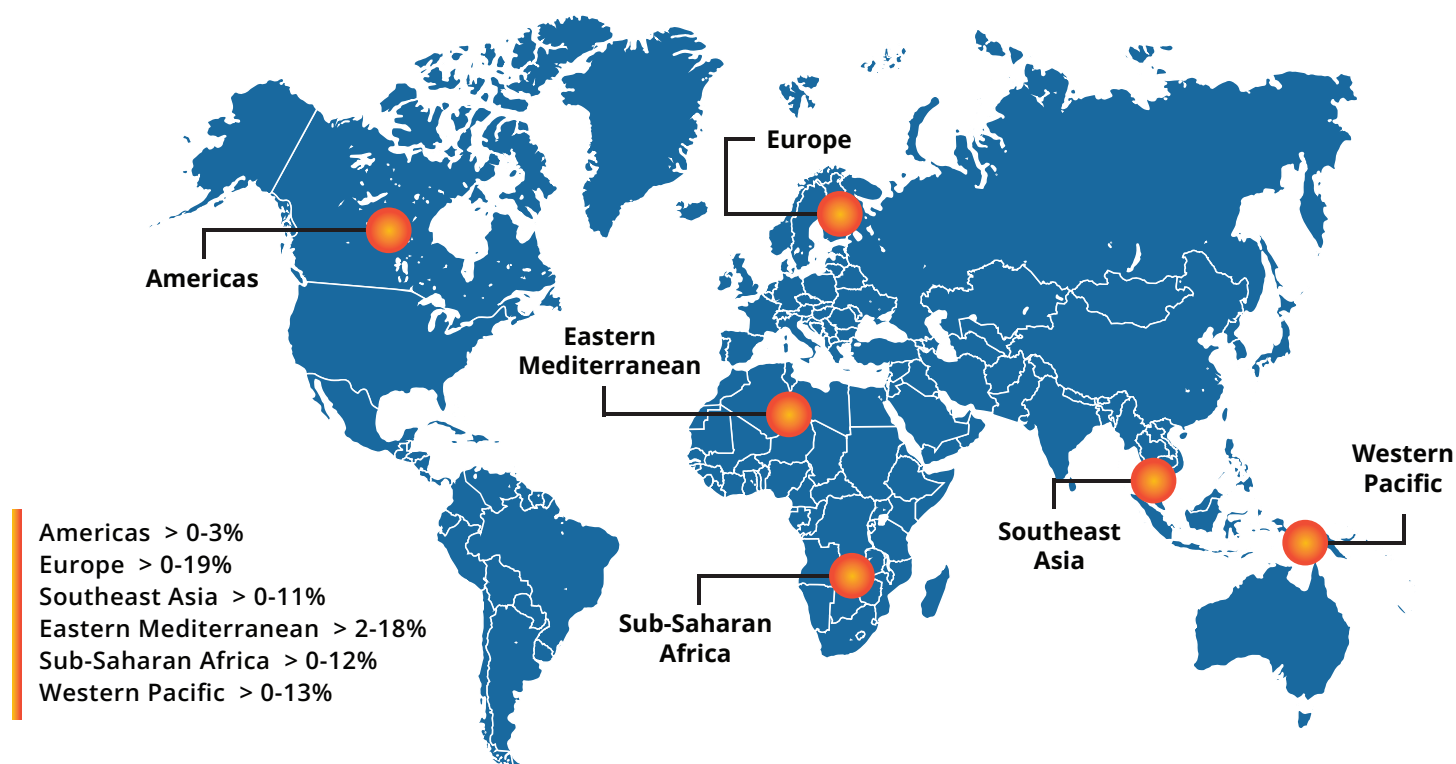


The Theme for the year 2023 is:  
*'Strengthening Education to Bridge the Thalassemia Care Gap'*<sup>2</sup>

### Worldwide Prevalence of Thalassemia:

Thalassemia has been identified as a significant global and frequently occurring monogenic disorder.





Some of the most common symptoms of thalassemia are:

*Fatigue and weakness, Fragile bones (osteoporosis), Delayed growth, Lack of appetite, Heart-related problems, Pale skin, Darker yellow to light brown urine. <sup>5</sup>*

## The financial cost of the treatment of thalassemia is increasing in the UAE:

The financial costs incurred by the healthcare system in the UAE to treat thalassemia are increasing despite measures such as screenings, charity funding, and awareness campaigns. Critical illness coverage for people with Thalassemia is currently only available for those suffering from Thalassemia minor, due to the associated risks and complications linked to the condition.

*Thalassemia can create an economic burden on healthcare and financial resources. The estimated cost of thalassemia treatment for a child with transfusion-dependent thalassemia up to age 16 is approximately AED 1.2 million. According to a report, the global treatment cost for thalassemia is expected to increase by 7.9% by 2026. <sup>6</sup>*

## Thalassemia Treatments in the UAE:

Thalassemia is a significant threat in the UAE, the doctor may suggest the course of treatment based on the severity of the case. However, some thalassemia treatments include: <sup>5</sup>

### Blood Transfusion CPT CODE 36430

Blood transfusions help in increasing the hemoglobin and red blood cell levels, Patients with thalassemia major need lifelong regular blood transfusions. According to a survey in UAE, the annual estimated cost of blood transfusions is AED 30,000 to 40,000. <sup>6</sup>

### Iron Chelation

The iron chelation process is used to remove excess iron due to blood transfusion causing serious damage to the body. According to a survey in UAE, the annual estimated cost of regular iron chelation is AED 70,000 to 80,000. <sup>6</sup>

## UAE launched a new drug that claimed to cut thalassemia treatment costs by 40%:

To fight this deadly disease, recently a UAE-based pharmaceutical platform has procured the first affordable generic drug 'Irofin-Deferiprone' for Thalassemia patients, cutting the treatment cost by almost 40%. The drug is an iron chelator used to treat patients with iron overload due to transfusion when the current chelation therapy is inadequate. <sup>9</sup>

### Bone Marrow (Stem Cell) Transplant CPT CODE

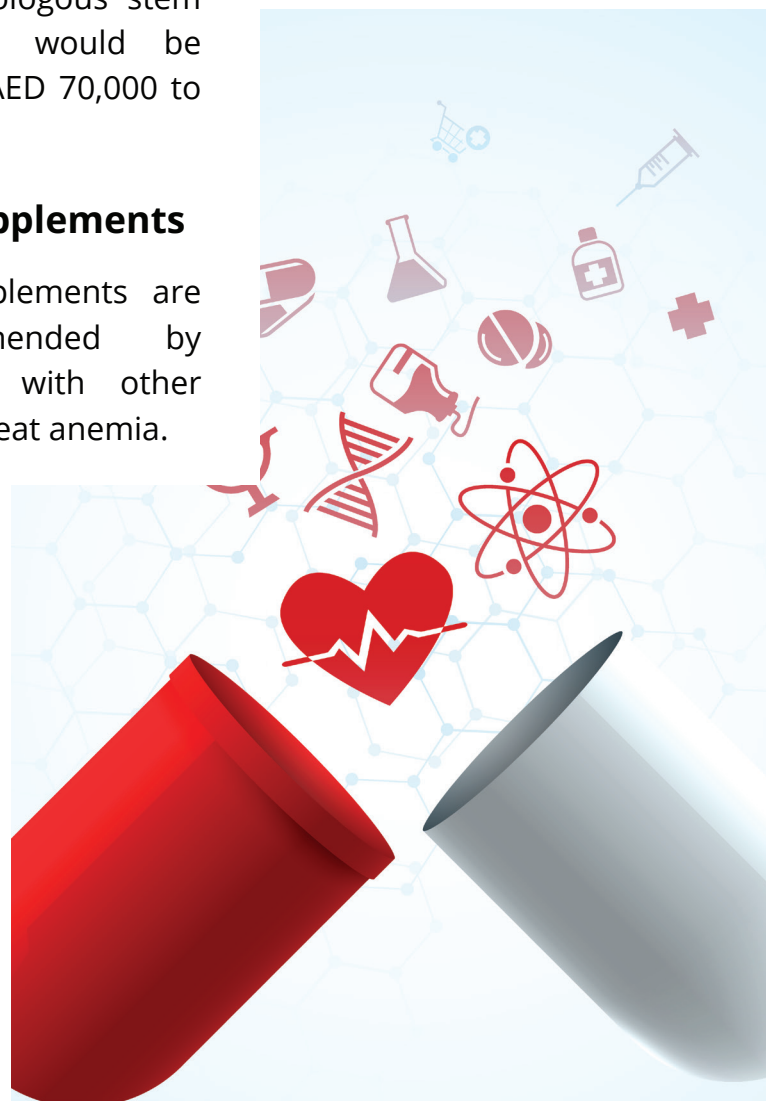
Bone marrow is the most effective and only treatment of thalassemia, the patient requires stem cells from a healthy donor with the same genetic makeup to get the transplant done. According to a survey in UAE, the estimated cost of an autologous stem cell transplant would be approximately AED 70,000 to 80,000. <sup>7</sup>

### Folic Acid Supplements

Folic acid supplements are also recommended by doctors along with other treatments to treat anemia.

### Surgical Procedure CPT CODE 38100

Some surgical procedures such as splenectomy are found to be effective to remove an enlarged spleen used in thalassemia treatment. According to a survey in UAE, the estimated Cheapest price available is AED 7,500 to 8,000. <sup>8</sup>





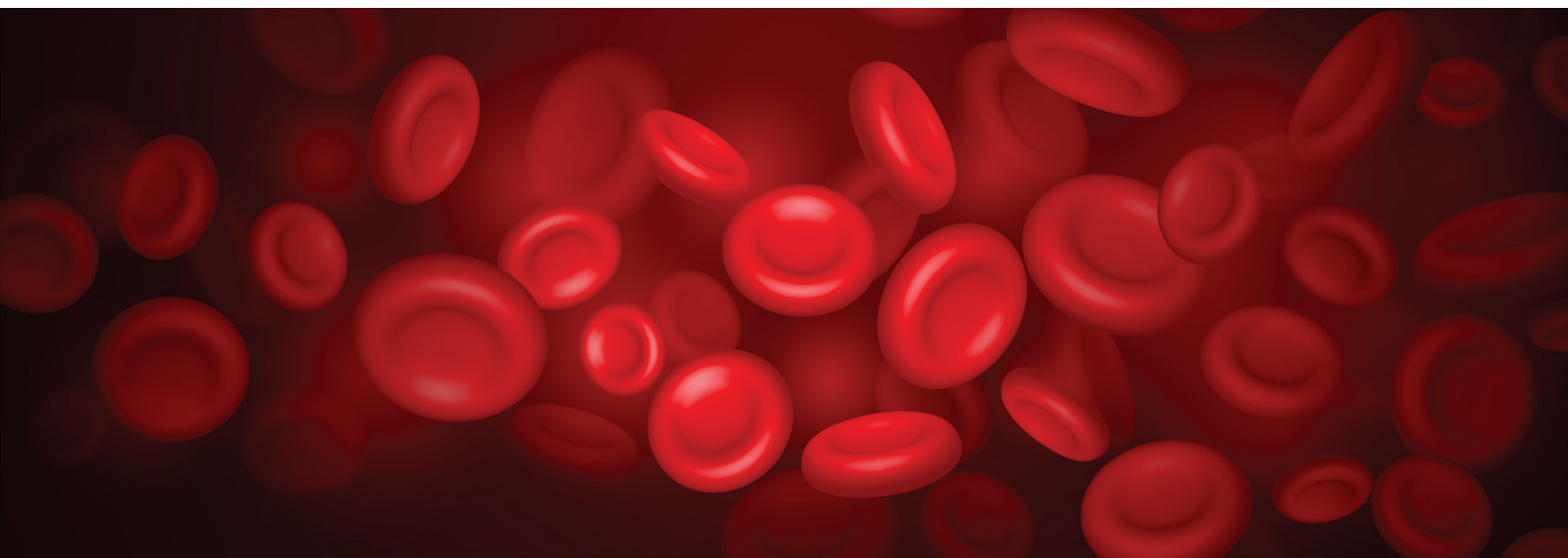
## Abu Dhabi introduced New clinical trials to treat thalassemia:

In another milestone in the health sector in 2023, Abu Dhabi is set to begin two global clinical trials to transform the way thalassemia is being treated. Abu Dhabi will take part in the two phase 3 trials, called Energise and Energise-T, which will test the effectiveness of Mitapivat, a drug that has shown promise as a treatment for thalassemia.

*One part of the Abu Dhabi trials, Energise, will evaluate Mitapivat's effectiveness at improving hemoglobin levels in non-transfusion-dependent thalassemia patients.*

*The study's other program, Energise-T, will consider whether transfusion requirements can be reduced in transfusion-dependent thalassemia patients.*

Mitapivat is approved in the US and the EU for managing hemolytic anemia in adults with a pyruvate kinase deficiency with great potential. The primary goal of the Energise-T trial is to reduce the need for transfusions by at least 50%. This will have great implications because it will decrease the transfusion demand and it could improve the quality of life. <sup>10</sup>



## Preventive measures remain key:

Thalassemia tends to be more common in people of Middle Eastern, African, Mediterranean, South, South-East, or East Asian descent. The main prevention against Thalassemia is raising awareness among citizens about the proper screening before marriage.

*In 2008, the UAE government launched a campaign to promote premarital screening, which since 2012, has been made compulsory for all couples who are planning to get married. Despite efforts to reduce the number of children born with thalassemia, there is still a large carrier population in the UAE. <sup>11</sup>*

## TOPIC 2: MARBURG VIRUS DEADLY DISEASE OUTBREAK

Marburg virus disease is a severe and life-threatening hemorrhagic fever that is rare but highly dangerous to human health. It is a zoonotic RNA virus that is transmitted from animals to humans in a closed environment, such as mines or caves inhabited by bats.

Marburg was caused by an Ebola-like virus with a fatality rate **ranging from 22% to 90% depending on the outbreak**. It is declared fatal by the World Health Organization. It spreads between people via close contact with the bodily fluids of infected people, or surfaces, like contaminated bed sheets, **has already killed nine people in its first-ever outbreak in Equatorial Guinea**.<sup>12</sup>

### Causes

- ▶ Contaminated food products
- ▶ Close contact with infected animal
- ▶ Contact with infected animal's bodily fluids
- ▶ Contact with infected person via bodily fluids
- ▶ Burial ceremonies with direct bodily contact with infected person



### Background

- ▶ Zoonotic Virus
  - Animal reservoir is african fruit bats
  - Can Lead to MVD: Rare & Severe Hemorrhagic Fever affecting humans & primates



### Signs & Symptoms

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Chills
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Sore Throat
- ▶ Weakness
- ▶ Muscle Aches
- ▶ Symptoms of MVD
  - Diarrhea, Abdominal Pain, Nausea, Vomiting, Rash, Severe Hemorrhagic Signs
  - Confusion, Seizures, Shock, Multiple Organ Failure, Death



### Diagnosis

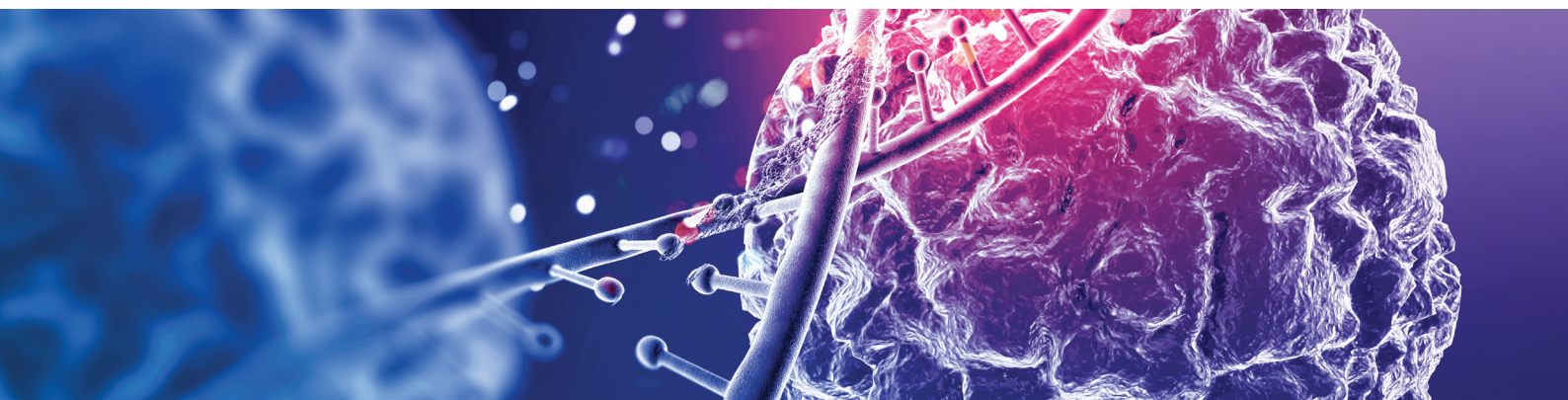
- ▶ Throat & Nasal Swabs
- ▶ Cerebrospinal Fluid
- ▶ Urine or Blood
- ▶ Elisa, IgG or IgM Elisa
- ▶ rt-PCR
- ▶ Virus Isolation via Cell Culture



### Treatment

- ▶ Supportive Care<sup>13</sup>





## Treatment for Murburg virus

At present, there is no vaccine to offer protection against the Marburg virus or limit the spread of individuals with the virus. Prevention strategies against the spread focus on risk reduction and contact tracing. Monoclonal antibody therapies are under development for Marburg virus infection, and antiviral therapy such as Remdesivir has been used in clinical studies for Ebola. The combination of mAbs and remdesivir induced an 80% protection rate against the Marburg virus in rhesus macaques.<sup>14</sup>

*The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman have issued health warnings against the Marburg virus, urging its citizens and residents to take preventative measures and avoid travel to countries where an outbreak has been reported.*

### The Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP) has issued four tips to stay safe:



## TOPIC 3: HEALTH UPDATES

### Mandatory Health Insurance 2023:

By the first quarter of 2023, health insurance will be required in each of the UAE's emirates. The five states will implement similar programs like Thiqa and Saada used in Abu Dhabi and Dubai respectively. According to this regulation, employers must now provide health insurance coverage to their employees. This mandate aims to guarantee that everyone in the nation has access to high-quality healthcare services and is financially protected from unanticipated medical costs. Having a policy in place enables you to abide by the law, avoid fines, and preserve your legal resident status. <sup>16</sup>

*The UAE health insurance market size reached AED 28 billion in 2022. Looking forward, according to research, it is expected that the health insurance market to reach AED 43 billion by 2028, exhibiting a growth rate (CAGR) of 7.32% during 2023-2028. <sup>17</sup>*

*The Emirates Insurance Association (EIA) has stated that making health insurance compulsory in all the emirates will increase total written premiums, which are expected to reach 50 million AED in 2023. <sup>18</sup>*

The existing premium rate for employees in Dubai i.e., ranges from AED 550- AED 650 and in Abu Dhabi is AED 950, higher than the newly launched rates of Northern Emirates which are available at price ranges below AED 1,000. The premium rates across Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, and Umm Al Quwain are not standardized as the regulations and minimum coverage for each of the emirates are different. Depending on the premium range selected and the benefits covered, health insurance coverage in the northern Emirates price varies between AED 400 and AED 3000. <sup>19</sup>

### Abu Dhabi has introduced a new program that targets unexplained chest illnesses:

Abu Dhabi has introduced "The microvascular and coronary spasm testing program" to assist patients who have been dealing with unexplained chest illnesses. In the past people may have been told it was a mental or 'phantom' illness and to visit a psychiatrist to understand the cause of unexplained chest pain, only to discover after specialized testing that they have this condition. Such abnormalities might be undetected on routine cardiac tests and coronary artery angiography. The exceedingly complex testing approach necessitates the use of expert interventional cardiologists and equipment that can check for abnormalities in both the big coronary arteries and the smallest arteries, which cannot be seen by human eyes.

This unique advanced program provides new capabilities and the latest innovation in medical technology to ensure a specific diagnosis is provided to improve patients' quality of life. Which



helps in effective treatment options that include medications and lifestyle changes to relieve symptoms and restore a good quality of life. A significant number of patients who have angina may have some degree of microvascular disease or spasm.

*The frequency of these illnesses tends to be higher in women, but a sizable portion of male patients are also impacted. Women are at higher risk for coronary Microvascular Decompression if they have lower-than-normal estrogen levels at any point in their adult lives. Microvascular angina and coronary spasms are also more prevalent in people who smoke, have diabetes, or have high blood pressure.* <sup>20</sup>

### WHO to consider adding obesity Drugs to 'Essential' medicines list:

The World Health Organization's "essential medicines list," which directs government buying choices in low- and middle-income nations, may for the first time include medications that treat obesity, a major health issue. It addresses the Saxenda medication as an active component that helps in weight loss. It's a daily injection that modifies the brain's response to hunger and reduces the pace at which the stomach empties, causing a person to feel satisfied for longer. On the WHO's list of essential medications, it would be the first treatment for obesity.

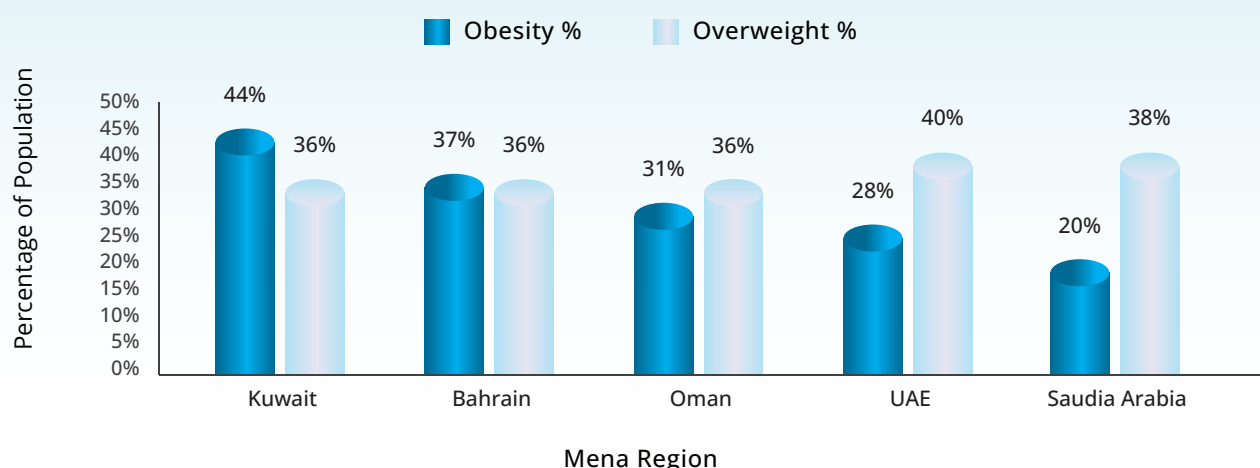
*'Saxenda' is a once-daily injection. It has been shown to help people reduce 5 to 10 percent of their body weight. It is \$400 - \$500 per month in the United States and \$100 - \$200 per month in Europe.*

*According to the WHO, there are currently over 650 million obese individuals worldwide and around 1.3 billion who are overweight. 70% of those who are obese or overweight live in low and middle-income nations.* <sup>21</sup>

*By 2025, global obesity prevalence is predicted to reach 18% in men and surpass 21% in women, if Left untreated.* <sup>22</sup>

*The latest World Obesity data showed Kuwait has the region's highest number of people at risk of developing health problems related to their weight:* <sup>23</sup>

### Prevalence of Obesity and Overweight



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## How we can help



**Pricing and  
Predictive  
Analysis**



**Fraud Waste  
and Abuse**



**Cost  
Containment  
Alternative**



**Performance  
Monitoring  
and Analytics**



**Profit  
Optimization**



**Provide  
Network  
Structure**

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