

12 Common Health Conditions

Diabetes



When you eat, your body breaks down the food and it goes into your blood.



Your body makes a hormone called **insulin**.

Insulin helps to move sugar (also called glucose) out of your blood.



Your body then breaks down the sugar to make energy.



If you have diabetes, your body cannot do this by itself.

This means you will have too much or too little sugar (glucose) in your blood.



This can make you unwell.

It can lead to serious problems with your eyes, heart and nerves.

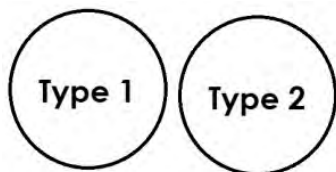


Diabetes is a life-long illness. It affects your everyday life.



Diabetes needs treatment.

If you do not treat diabetes it can badly damage your body.



There are 2 main types of diabetes: Type 1 and Type 2.



Type 1

Type 2

A lot more people have type 2 diabetes than type 1 diabetes.



You are more likely to have type 2 diabetes if:

- You are over-weight.



- You don't exercise much.



- Other people in your close family have type 2 diabetes.



- You are over the age of 40, or if you are South Asian you are over the age of 25.



- You are of a South Asian, Chinese, African Caribbean or Black African background – even if you were born in the UK.

What Are The Symptoms Of Diabetes?



Symptoms are signs that something is wrong.

The main symptoms of diabetes are:



- Feeling very thirsty.



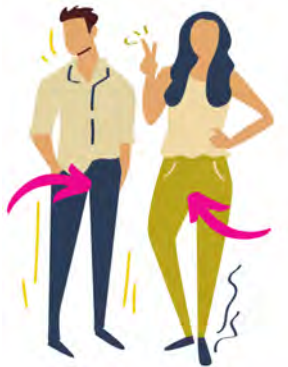
- Needing to go to the toilet for a wee more often than usual.



- Feeling very tired.



- Losing weight (without trying to).



- Itching or soreness around your vagina or penis.



- Cuts on your body taking a long time to get better.



- Things looking blurry.



If you have any symptoms, or are worried about diabetes, make an appointment to see your GP (doctor).



They can do a urine (wee) test and a blood test to see if you have diabetes.



The earlier a doctor finds that you have diabetes the sooner they can start your treatment.



This will make it less likely that diabetes will cause you other health problems.



Treatment And Care For Diabetes

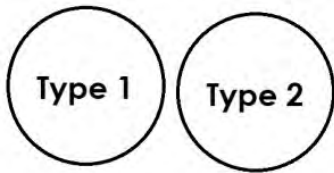
Your doctor will talk to you about the treatment you need.



You may also need to make some changes to your life, like changing the things you eat. Your doctor will talk to you about this.



You will have to check your blood regularly to check the amount of sugar (glucose) in your blood.



Treatment and care for type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes are different.

Please read about type 1 or type 2 diabetes below.



Treatment And Care For Type 1 Diabetes

You will need to have injections of insulin every day for the rest of your life.



You will need to keep checking your blood sugar level.



There are different ways to do these things.

Speak to your diabetes team about what is best for you.

You will need to manage your food and meals.



- You might need to eat at regular times of the day.
- You might need to be careful not to eat too much or too little of certain foods.



You can go on a course to learn about how to manage your diabetes.

You can also do courses on the internet or face-to-face.



If the amount of sugar in your blood becomes too low this is called **hypoglycaemia** – known as a **hypo**.



Signs that you are having a hypo are:

- Sweating.



- Feeling worried and cross.



- Feeling hungry.



- Finding it hard to concentrate.



- Things looking blurry.



- Trembling and feeling shaky.



If this happens you need to eat or drink something sugary, like 5 jelly babies or a glass of fruit juice.



Check your blood after 10 minutes.



Make sure the people you spend time with know what to do if you need help.



If the amount of sugar in your blood is too high this is called **hyperglycaemia**.



Speak to your care team about this.



Very high levels of sugar in your blood can lead to a problem called diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA).

This needs to be treated in hospital as it can cause death.



Going for regular check-ups

You will need to see your GP or diabetes nurse for check-ups.



You will need to have your blood checked every 3-6 months.



You will also need to have other checks done. This is to make sure your diabetes is not giving you other health problems.



- Your blood pressure needs to be checked.

This is because you are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke.



- If you notice a feeling of numbness or tingling in your body, see your GP.

This can be a sign of damage to your nerves.



- Your feet should be checked every year by your GP or diabetes nurse.
- You should check your feet every day. See your GP or diabetes nurse if you find cuts, cracks or blisters, pain or tingling or numb feet.

If these are not treated it can lead to very serious problems.



- Your eyes should be checked every year.

Diabetes can cause problems in your eyes which can cause sight problems and blindness.

Speak to your GP if you have blurred vision, shapes floating in your vision, or if the light hurts your eyes.

Help and Support



You can wear a special wristband to show people that you have diabetes.

This can be helpful if someone needs to help you in an emergency.

You can buy them on the internet.



Being told that you have type 1 diabetes is not easy.

It can take time to get used to it.



Talk to friends and family about how you feel and how they can help.



The charity Diabetes UK runs local support groups.

You can get help and talk to other people with diabetes.

[Find a group.](#)



You can contact the Diabetes UK helpline for questions about diabetes:

- Phone 0345 123 2399
- Email helpline@diabetes.org.uk



Treatment And Care For Type 2 Diabetes

Your doctor will give you medicine – this is usually in tablets.



You should eat a healthy diet.



You might need to do more exercise, like walking or swimming.



You will need to go for regular check-ups of your blood.



Diabetes can cause other health problems. You will need to look out for any signs of these.



You might be able to go on a free course to learn more about treatment and care for your diabetes.



Medicine For Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes medicine helps to lower the amount of sugar in your blood.

You will usually start with a medicine called metformin.



You will have to take diabetes medicine for the rest of your life.



It might take time for your body to get used to the medicine.



Diabetes usually gets worse over time, so you may have to take more medicines in the future.



Some people need to inject themselves with medicine called 'insulin'.

You don't have to do this to start with.

It is only used for type 2 diabetes if the other medicines no longer work.



Your GP or diabetes nurse will explain how to take your medicine.

If you need to inject yourself they will show you how.



Taking medicine for diabetes might cause other things to happen to you.

These are called **side-effects**.

They might include:



- Feeling bloated or having diarrhoea (runny poo).



- Putting on weight or losing weight.



- Feeling sick.



- Swollen ankles.



If this happens to you speak to your GP or diabetes nurse who can help you.

Keep taking your medicine until you speak to them. Don't stop taking your medicine unless they say this is ok.



Eating well

You can still eat all foods.



You should:

- Eat lots of different foods – including fruit, vegetables and starchy foods like pasta.



- Not eat foods with too much sugar, fat or salt.



- Make sure you don't skip any meals – eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.



You might find it easier to make small changes to your diet every week to help you to get used to eating differently.



You might be able to get help with changing the foods you eat from someone called a dietician.

You can speak to your GP or diabetes nurse about this.



Being active

Keeping your body active helps to lower the amount of sugar in your blood.



You should try to do at least 2.5 hours of exercise every week.

This can be anything that gets you out of breath. It could be:



- Walking fast.



- Climbing stairs.



- Doing housework or gardening.



Be a healthy weight

If you are overweight it is harder for your body to lower your blood sugar level.

If you need to lose weight you should try to do this slowly by eating healthily.



Going for regular check-ups

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Speak to your GP if you have blurred vision, shapes floating in your vision, or if the light hurts your eyes.



Pregnancy and diabetes

If you are thinking of having a baby speak to your GP.



You can have a safe pregnancy if you have type 2 diabetes.

But you will need to have more checks and might need to do some more things to keep you and your baby safe.

Help and support



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