

# Diabetes and You

## A Quick Guide

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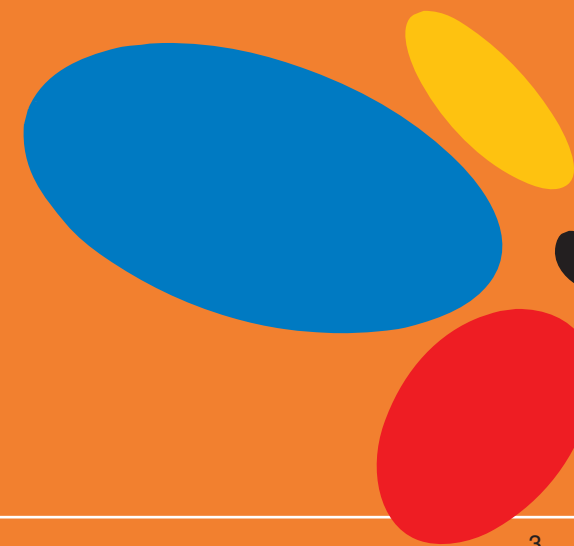
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## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose (a type of sugar) in your blood because the body can't use it properly. Glucose is needed to produce energy and in normal healthy blood glucose levels (sometimes referred to as blood sugars) is regulated in the body by a hormone called insulin.

# Diabetes and You



## There are two main types of diabetes:

### Type 1

The body doesn't produce any insulin at all, which is needed to help the body to use glucose. This is the least common of the types of diabetes and usually occurs in childhood, but it can occur in adulthood as well. No one knows what causes type 1, but it's not to do with being overweight. Type 1 diabetes is treated by injecting insulin and a healthy diet and regular exercise are also important.

### Type 2

The body doesn't produce enough insulin which is needed to help the body use glucose, or the insulin it does produce doesn't work properly (called insulin resistance). This is the most common type of diabetes and usually occurs in people aged over 40, although in South Asian people it can be as young as 25. Type 2 diabetes is linked to age, family history (so other members of your family have diabetes), being overweight and less active. It may be managed by diet and exercise alone although tablets are often used and you may need to inject insulin.

## What does this mean for me?

Once you have diabetes, it does not go away and both type 1 and 2 can lead to long term health problems. But the good news is that you can do a lot to manage your diabetes and this will reduce your risk of problems later on.

You can make changes to your diet and how active you are which will all help. You may also need to take medication or inject insulin and making sure you take these correctly will help to control your diabetes.

There may be additional things you need to do or be aware of if you drive or if you are planning to have a baby or are pregnant and when you take out insurance. Information on these can be found in the sections overleaf.



# Key things to be aware of now you have diabetes

There are some important things to be aware of now you have diabetes. These will help you to make the best choices for you to manage your condition well. These are mentioned below and there are more detailed sections in the booklet “Diabetes and You. A more detailed guide to controlling diabetes” in your pack for when you are ready for more information.

## Emotions and diabetes

Being told you have diabetes can be a shock and you might go through all sorts of emotions. You might be finding it difficult to understand why you’ve got diabetes, particularly if you feel well, or you might be worried about how you’ll manage with it. Feeling low in mood can affect how you look after your diabetes. Learn more about this and what to do in the booklet “Diabetes and You. A more detailed guide to controlling diabetes”.

## You’ll need to see your doctor or nurse regularly

Now you have diabetes you will need to see your doctor or nurse regularly (at least once a year) to have health checks and monitor your diabetes. It is important that you attend these appointments as diabetes is a condition that needs to be monitored as it can change over time. Your doctor or nurse will carry out a set of checks each year and discuss with you what you can do to control your diabetes.

## Eye check

As diabetes can affect your sight, you will also need to have a special eye check every year called retinal screening and you will be invited to attend an appointment locally with a special team who will examine your eyes. If you are found to have any problems with your eyes as a result of your diabetes you will then be referred for treatment.

## Your feet

As diabetes can affect your feet it’s really important to look after them to keep them healthy and be aware of any changes or signs of problems and what to do.

Your doctor or nurse should check your feet every year but in the meantime there are things you can do to look after your feet.

## Treatment

Making some changes to your life may help you manage your diabetes and control it well. Thinking about the types of food you eat to balance your glucose levels, being more active, stopping smoking and managing your weight can all help to control diabetes.

It doesn’t mean you have to give up completely all the things you like to eat or go to the gym every day (unless you want to) but rather that you make some changes that you can stick to.

You can adapt a recipe to make it healthier, eat smaller portions and be more active by walking short journeys instead of taking the car.

You may also need to take tablets or have insulin injections or both. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you and if you need to inject insulin you'll be shown how to do this.

## Complications

Diabetes that is not well managed can cause long term health problems (complications). This can include problems with your eyes (and can lead to blindness), problems with your feet as your circulation is affected (this can lead to amputation of toes or feet), heart and kidney disease, stroke and sexual dysfunction (such as erection problems).

However, making the changes to have a healthier diet, stopping smoking, being more active and taking any medication you are prescribed correctly will all help to reduce your risk of these.

## Hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose) and hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose)

Balancing medication and injections with food and activity is key to successfully living with diabetes. But there may be times when this doesn't happen and you may experience hypoglycaemia (hypo) when blood glucose is too low (with insulin and certain medications) or hyperglycaemia (hyper) when blood glucose is too high.

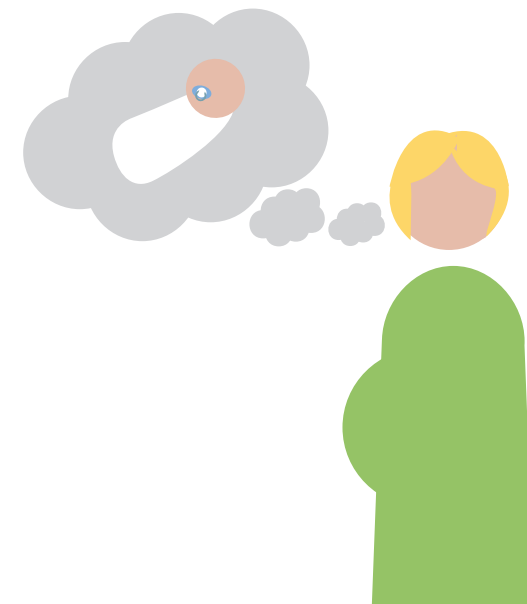
These will make you feel unwell and in extreme cases can result in a coma. Knowing the symptoms and what to do will help you to manage these as will telling your friends and family.

## Driving and diabetes

Having diabetes doesn't mean you have to give up driving, but it does mean you need to be aware of certain actions you might need to take. You may need to tell the DVLA that you have diabetes – this will depend on the type of medication you use and the type of vehicle group you drive and you'll need to be aware of your responsibilities regarding driving with diabetes.

## Planning a baby or pregnant?

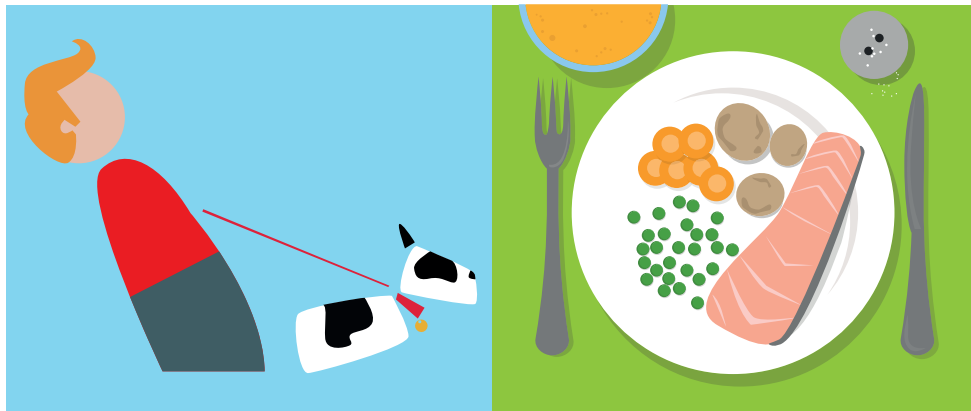
If you are pregnant or planning to have a baby it is vital that you speak to your doctor or nurse to make sure you get the advice to help you plan a safe and healthy pregnancy. Controlling your glucose levels before and during your pregnancy is key to preventing complications occurring during pregnancy and childbirth and you'll need to be aware of what medication can or can't be taken.



# What can you do to control your diabetes?

## Why control diabetes?

You may not feel unwell when you have diabetes so you may wonder is it worth making any changes to your lifestyle or taking your medication correctly. But controlling your diabetes through making healthier choices and using your medication correctly will help you to manage your diabetes and this will reduce your risk of complications which may take some time to develop and prevent hypos and hypers. So it really is worth making the changes and taking your medication as prescribed.



## What can you do?

- Know about diabetes – the more you know the better you will be able to manage it and keep yourself in good health. Read the “Diabetes and You. A more detailed guide to controlling diabetes” which is included in your pack as this has lots of advice about what you can do.
- If you are overweight make some changes to your diet and how active you are that will help you to lose some weight and to maintain this in the future.
- If you smoke ask your doctor or nurse what support you can access to help you give up. Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease and stroke and continuing to smoke makes this 9 times more likely. Stopping smoking will help you to reduce your chances of these.
- Attend all of your health reviews as these will help you to see how well you are managing your diabetes and if any changes need to be made to your medication.
- Take your medication correctly – it will help to control your diabetes if it is taken as prescribed.

All of the sections in this quick guide are covered in more detail and what you can do in the “Diabetes and You. A more detailed guide to controlling diabetes” which is included in your pack.



North East Lincolnshire CCG would like to thank the members of the patient group who through their own experiences of living with diabetes helped to shape the guide, members of Accord who reviewed the guide and local clinicians who provided the expertise.

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in any other language, large print format or braille please call 0300 3000 500 or email [NELCCG.askus@nhs.net](mailto:NELCCG.askus@nhs.net)

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