



## NHS Tayside Diabetes Managed Clinical Network Patient Information Leaflet

### Your Guide to Type 2 Diabetes

#### **Diabetes is a common health condition.**

About 1.4 million people in the UK are known to have diabetes that is about three in every 100 people. About 9 out of ten people with diabetes have Type 2 diabetes. Although the condition can occur at any age, it is rare in infants and becomes more common as people get older.

#### **Type 2 diabetes**

Type 2 diabetes used to be called 'maturity onset' diabetes because it usually appears in middle-aged or elderly people, although it does occasionally appear in younger people.

Risk factors include

- Being overweight
- Having a blood relative with diabetes
- Being of South Asian or African-Caribbean origin
- Having had diabetes during pregnancy also known as Gestational Diabetes

People with Type 2 Diabetes can still produce insulin but they are not making enough to meet the body's needs or the insulin they do produce is not being used properly.

Insulin is used to transfer the glucose from the blood stream to the cells of the body. If there is not enough insulin the glucose builds up in the blood stream.

#### **Common Myth**

Some people wrongly describe Type 2 diabetes as 'mild' diabetes. There is no such thing as mild diabetes. All diabetes should be taken seriously and treated properly.

Diabetes UK publishes a free 'Are you at risk?' leaflet in English and various other languages.

## **Symptoms of Diabetes**

### **The main symptoms of diabetes are**

- Increased thirst
- Going to the toilet all the time - especially at night
- Extreme tiredness
- Weight loss
- Genital itching or regular episodes of thrush
- Blurred vision.

Type 2 diabetes develops slowly and the symptoms are usually less severe. Some people may not notice any symptoms at all and their diabetes is only picked up in a routine medical check up. Some people may put the symptoms down to getting older or overwork.

## **Treatment of Diabetes**

Although diabetes cannot be cured, it can be treated very successfully. Knowing why people with diabetes develop high blood sugar levels will help you to understand how some of the treatments work.

Glucose comes from the ingestion of sugary or starchy foods. If someone has diabetes they have high levels of glucose or sugar circulating in their blood stream that isn't used by cells or turned into energy, this is why people with untreated diabetes often feel tired. The unused glucose passes into the urine, pulling water with it. This is why people with untreated diabetes pass large amounts of urine and are extremely thirsty.

A hormone called insulin usually controls glucose levels. Insulin is made in a gland close to the stomach called the pancreas. Diabetes develops either because there is not enough insulin being made by the pancreas, or the insulin being made is not working properly.

People with untreated diabetes may also lose weight because fat tissue and protein, mainly from muscle, are broken down as an alternative energy source.

## How is Type 2 Diabetes treated?

- A healthy diet - low in sugar, low in fat and high in fibre
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Regular exercise
- Good blood pressure control
- Tablets - They are not a substitute for healthy eating
- Insulin - often necessary in some people when tablets are not sufficient.

If not properly controlled Type 2 Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications that may affect the eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart and major blood vessels.

### Diabetes and tablets

There are several different types of tablet, which work in different ways.

#### **Sulphonylureas - glipizide, gliclazide**

- They encourage the body to produce more insulin in the pancreas
- They should be taken 30 minutes before food
- They can cause hypoglycaemia - low blood sugar
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#### **Biguanides - Metformin**

- Usually the first choice for people especially if they are overweight
- It helps the insulin you already have work more efficiently
- It does not cause hypoglycaemia
- It must be taken with food as it can cause stomach upset or diarrhoea

#### **Alpha-Glucosidase Inhibitors - Acarbose**

- This slows down the digestion of food and glucose absorption
- It must be taken with the first mouthful of food as it can cause stomach upset, wind or diarrhoea

#### **Thiazolidinedones - Rosiglitazone, Pioglitazone**

- They help the body use the insulin more efficiently and help to preserve the insulin-producing cells
- Usually used in combination with Metformin
- Not suitable for some patients with heart failure or liver problems

#### **Prandial Glucose Regulators - Repaglinide, Nateglinide**

- Helps the body make more insulin from the pancreas after a meal
- Taken before food

## **Diabetes and combination therapy**

Some patients take a combination of different tablets or even tablets and insulin therapy to control their blood sugar levels. The need for changes in treatment can alter over time and therefore it is important to attend regular check-ups for your diabetes either with your diabetes team or your GP.

## **Diabetes and insulin therapy**

If your body has stopped producing enough insulin for the tablets to work, you may require insulin. This is given by injections. Your diabetes specialist nurse will give you the necessary information and support.

## **General Advice**

- Take your tablets as instructed
- Do not stop your tablets unless instructed by your diabetes team or GP
- Do not double your dose if you miss a tablet
- Do not stop your tablets if you are unwell - even if you are not eating
- Ensure you have a continued supply

Ask your GP for a prescription exemption request form if you require tablets. If you suffer from side effects from the tablets contact your GP. Other medications such as steroids and some diuretics (water tablets) can cause higher blood sugar levels. Your diabetes treatment may need altered in this case.

Everyone with diabetes is legally obliged to inform their insurance company that they have diabetes. Otherwise your policy may not be valid. You need to inform the DVLA if you are on insulin or certain tablets for your diabetes.

For further information see leaflet “Diabetes and Driving” available from your diabetes team and at [www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk](http://www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk) in the patient information section.

## **How do I control my diabetes and stay as healthy as possible?**

- Attend all your appointments where you will receive help and advice as well as screening for any complications which can be treated promptly
- Self monitoring blood sugar is appropriate for some individuals, discuss this with your diabetes team.

- Take any medication as directed.
- Eat a healthy diet and try to maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly. Keep active as this helps to control your diabetes and has other general health benefits
- Do not smoke. Smoking significantly increases the risk of complications of diabetes especially heart disease
- Keep to sensible amounts of alcohol.
- Have your eyes screened yearly
- Inspect your feet daily.
- Blood pressure control is very important for people with diabetes - you may require medication to control this.

## **Other Information**

A wide range of patient information is available on the Tayside Diabetes website [www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk](http://www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk) or from your diabetes healthcare team.

### **Diabetes UK**

Diabetes UK can provide information and advice on all aspects of diabetes. Contact the Diabetes UK Scotland Careline on Tel 0845 120 2960 or [carelinescotland@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:carelinescotland@diabetes.org.uk).

There are local Diabetes UK Support Groups in Dundee, Angus and Perth & Kinross. Further information about where and when these are held can be found on [www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk](http://www.diabetes-healthnet.ac.uk) in the Patient Information Section.

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