

Diabetes Information Sheet

Your guide to Type 1 diabetes

What is type 1 diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes usually develops in people under the age of 35, often in childhood, but it can happen in any age group. In Type 1 diabetes the cells in the pancreas which make insulin stop working. No one knows for sure why this happens, but it is likely that the body reacts abnormally against the pancreas.

Type 1 diabetes is treated with regular insulin injections combined with a healthy diet. Without insulin treatment, the blood glucose continues to rise and weight loss, vomiting and dehydration occur. Eventually drowsiness and diabetic coma can develop. This can be fatal if insulin treatment is not given.

The main aim of insulin treatment is to achieve near normal blood glucose levels (between 4 and 7 mmol/l before meals and under 9 mmol/l after meals). This, along with a healthy lifestyle, will help to improve general health and protect against long-term damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart and major arteries.

- **The risk of this long-term damage can be greatly reduced if the blood glucose is kept under control**
- **Smoking also significantly increases the risk of developing problems associated with diabetes. This is why all people with diabetes are advised to stop smoking**

How to achieve good blood glucose control?

The Diabetes team is there to help and advise you on how to achieve good control.

Attend the clinic regularly. Regular check-ups mean that you will receive advice on how to best manage your diabetes and avoid complications of diabetes. It also means that if problems do develop, they can be picked up and treated at an early stage.

Self Testing: Home blood glucose testing is a tool for you to use to monitor how well you are controlling your diabetes. The diabetes nurse or practice nurse will demonstrate how to do this. Urine or blood testing for ketones is needed when you are unwell (see Sick Day Rules). Learn how to adjust your insulin doses based on your results.

Exercise: Regular exercise is an ideal way to keep fit, healthy and reduce blood glucose levels. Any form of exercise is beneficial e.g. swimming, keep fit classes or walking.

Useful information for people on insulin

Storing Insulin

- Store your insulin in a fridge but not in the freezer compartment
- “In-use” cartridges or pens are stable outside a fridge for up to 4 weeks
- Do not place cartridge pens in the fridge
- Do not leave insulin near a fire, radiator or in strong sunlight

Injecting Insulin

- The usual places to inject are upper thighs, abdomen or buttocks. Stick to the same site for insulin, give at one time of day, but rotate within a site.
- Otherwise your insulin may not be absorbed properly and you could develop unsightly ‘bumps’ or swelling (Lipohypertrophy).

Safe Disposal

- Ask your nurse about safe disposal of sharps

Hypoglycaemia (‘Hypo’)

- This means a low blood glucose
- The most common symptoms are trembling, sweating, dizziness and often a feeling of hunger, but confusion can also occur.
- The most common causes of hypoglycaemia are missed or delayed meals, insufficient carbohydrate, excessive exercise, too large a dose of insulin or drinking alcohol.
- Treat hypoglycaemia immediately by eating something sweet e.g. 3 glucose tablets or 50ml Lucozade or a small glass (150ml) of ordinary (not diet) coke or lemonade, followed by something ‘starchy’ e.g. a sandwich or your next meal if due.

Always carry something sweet in your pocket or bag along with your identification.

Hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose)

- This usually comes on more slowly than a 'Hypo' and **can lead to ketoacidosis**
- The symptoms are thirst, passing large amounts of urine and tiredness.
- This can happen during times of illness e.g. a 'flu' or if you have had too little insulin or missed insulin injections or have not stuck to your diet.
- If this happens, increase the amount of blood tests you are doing, increase your insulin dose if you know how to and check your urine for ketones, especially if you feel unwell. See the leaflet on sick day rules. Never stop your insulin.
- Contact your diabetes specialist nurse or GP for more advice if required.

Diabetes UK

- Diabetes UK can provide advice on all aspects of diabetes and provide a voice for everyone living with diabetes
- There is a local Diabetes UK branch in Milton Keynes. Ask the Diabetes Nurse Specialist for more information.
- Diabetes UK is at 10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA, Tel 020 7424 1000
- Diabetes UK Careline is a confidential information service, Tel 0845 120 2960
- You can find Diabetes UK on the Internet at www.diabetes.org.uk

Local contact:

Diabetes Nurse Specialist at Milton Keynes Hospital. Tel 01908 243089

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