

Diabetes Information

Diabetes is on the increase, but it is an easily treatable condition.

Our bodies are like a motorcar; they need fuel to provide us with energy. This energy comes from glucose, a type of sugar that is found in what we eat and drink. However the glucose cannot get from our blood stream into the body cells by itself. It needs the help of a hormone called insulin, which is produced by the Pancreas (a gland behind the stomach).

When we eat our blood glucose (sugar) levels rise, this triggers the Pancreas to produce insulin which in turn 'unlocks' the cells to let the glucose enter, giving us the energy we need and lowering the blood glucose.

Diabetes is when these blood glucose levels do not return to normal levels due to a lack of Insulin.

There are 2 main types of Diabetes:

Type 1 Diabetes is when the Pancreas suddenly stops working altogether and is more often found in children and young adults. This type of Diabetes needs treating with Insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes is the most common form of Diabetes and is usually found in people with one or more of the following:

- Family History of Diabetes
- Excess weight (obesity)
- High-fat diets
- Lack of exercise

In Type 2 Diabetes, blood glucose levels are higher than normal, even when not eaten. One of the main reasons for this is that the insulin does not seem to work properly. The Pancreas is producing insulin, but the body's cells do not respond normally to it. At this stage a person does not realise the problem as the Pancreas produces more Insulin to keep the blood glucose levels at a normal level. Eventually the Pancreas cannot produce enough insulin to overcome this and the blood glucose levels begin to rise. In some cases giving rise to the following symptoms:

- Thirst
- Passing more water
- Tiredness
- Blurred vision

In some cases there are no symptoms.

The treatment is simple:

- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Take more exercise
- Your doctor may prescribe some medication to improve blood glucose control.
- If you suspect you have Diabetes make an appointment with the Practice Nurse who can organise a simple blood test.

Management of Type 2 Diabetes

Step 1 Diagnosis

This is made by 2 simple fasting blood tests in most cases. If the blood glucose is 7mmols or higher or if you are having symptoms of diabetes and one fasting blood glucose reading 7mmols or higher then a diagnosis of diabetes can be made.

Step 2 Education

An appointment is offered with our diabetes specialist nurses who explain to you what diabetes is and what lifestyle changes could improve your management of diabetes

Step 3 Self-Management

Our diabetic specialist nurses will teach you how to manage your own diabetes and will liaise with the doctor and initiate or change treatment as required.

Step 4 Monitoring

Our diabetic specialist nurse will monitor your diabetic control with the aid of blood tests on a 6 monthly basis if your diabetes is well controlled but more often if need be. This blood test is called HbA1c and tells us if your diabetes is well controlled, ideally this reading needs to be 5 to 7mmols.

Step 5 Prevention of Complications

Every year you will have a test on an early morning sample of your urine to check diabetes is not affecting your kidneys. You will also have a series of blood tests to check your cholesterol, Liver and Kidney function and HbA1c (blood glucose control) and you will be given an appointment with the nurse and doctor (Annual review appointment). Where you will have a full medical examination.

Step 6 Eye Check

As diabetes can affect your eyesight you will be offered an appointment to have the back of your eyes photographed to enable the doctor to monitor any changes and instigate any treatment needed.

Management of diabetes is a team effort and you are the main team player we are here to support you. However we can only help you if you attend our clinics and work with us. If clinic times are not convenient we can sometimes see you at other times. Please discuss this with your nurse.

Insulin Indication

Diabetes as a disease is not static. Treatment that was successful for a patient one day will become less effective as time passes. For this reason it is important to make sure, that if you have diabetes, you go for regular blood checks every 3 to 6 months. Only by having up to date blood results can the surgery treat diabetes effectively and prevent any complications from occurring i.e. loss of eyesight, impotence.

The surgery is very privileged to have the assistance of a visiting diabetic specialist nurse who is helping to review our diabetic patients to make sure they are on the most effective medication possible. In some cases this may involve an increase or change in the existing medication, for others, insulin may be indicated.

Insulin injections are not to be feared. They are simply a more effective way of providing

the body with the correct amount of insulin it needs to maintain good health. It is similar to a fuel injection system on a car.

People who have started insulin have reported having more energy and a decrease in unpleasant side effects and symptoms of diabetes.

For this reason the practice would strongly advise that people with diabetes, who are invited for a diabetic review, keep their appointments.

We can only help patients if they want our help and attend the surgery.