

Information

What is diabetes?

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Diabetes mellitus is a condition where the body cannot use the glucose, (sugar), properly so the level rises in the blood. We need glucose for energy. Glucose comes from foods such as bread, potatoes, chapatis, yams, plantain and is also made, by the body, in the liver.

To help the body use the glucose for energy, you need insulin. It is vital for life. Insulin is usually made by the body, in the pancreas and helps the glucose enter the body cells.

In diabetes, the blood glucose level rises, the body tries to lower it by passing the extra glucose out in the urine. This makes the person pass more urine, (water) which makes them thirsty so they drink more. One of the early signs of diabetes is when the person complains of feeling thirsty and needing to pass a lot of urine, (water). Because the body cannot use glucose for energy, it will start to use the fat stores in the body instead. This causes the person to lose weight. A person will often complain of

- feeling very thirsty and needing a lot to drink
- passing a lot of urine, (water), even at night
- feeling tired
- losing weight
- difficulty in seeing clearly
- itching or skin rashes.

Type 1 diabetes (also called insulin dependent diabetes)

Type 1 diabetes happens when the body is not able to make any insulin. Most people who develop this type of diabetes, are less than 40 years old. It is more common in people from Asian, African-Caribbean and Chinese communities. It is treated by insulin injections, healthy diet and physical activity.

Type 2 diabetes, (also called non-insulin dependent diabetes)

Type 2 diabetes happens when the body can still make some insulin, but not enough for its needs, or the insulin it makes, does not work properly, (known as insulin resistance). This is more common in people over 40 years of age, although recently there has been a significant increase in the number of teenagers and young adults developing Type 2 diabetes. It is more common in people from Asian, African-Caribbean and

The charity for people with diabetes

Diabetes UK is the operating name of the **British Diabetic Association**
Company limited by guarantee Registered office: 10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA
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Chinese communities. It is treated by healthy diet and physical activity alone, or with, tablets, healthy diet and physical activity. Some people with Type 2 diabetes need insulin by injection especially when they have had the diabetes for some years.

Myths about diabetes

- Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.
- You cannot eat sugar if you have diabetes.
- You can catch diabetes.
- You may only have 'mild' diabetes.
- You can be cured of diabetes.
- People with diabetes must not exercise.
- The diet for diabetes is very strict and you have to eat special foods.
- There are herbs and other preparations, which can replace insulin or tablets.
- You cannot drive if you have diabetes.
- You will not be able to get a job so easily.

Further information

We have a range of information sheets produced in five main Asian languages and Cantonese available from the Diabetes UK Careline including *Healthy lifestyle, fasting and diabetes*, *How Diabetes UK can help you*, *Diabetic complications* and *Hypoglycaemia*. To order information sheets or would like further information on any aspect of diabetes please telephone

Telephone 020 7424 1030 (translation service is available)

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

From January 2004 there will be a new Diabetes UK Careline number available

Telephone 0845 120 2960 (local call rate)

Facts about diabetes

No, being overweight makes you at risk of Type 2 diabetes.

No, sugar can be part of your total diet. Speak to a dietitian about this.

No, if a person in the family has diabetes, there is a greater risk of a family member to develop it.

No, you have diabetes or you do not.

No, it can be managed but there is no cure available. There are many treatments and the correct one will be decided for you.

No, physical activity is important in helping to control blood glucose levels.

No, you should eat the same healthy diet advised for everyone. Special diabetic foods are expensive and unnecessary.

No, some herbal remedies may help reduce the blood glucose level, but it will not cure it. There are certain vehicles, which you will not be allowed to drive. These include large buses and lorries. You must tell the driving licence office that you have diabetes.

There are some jobs from which you would be banned eg, airline pilot, driving a passenger bus. It should not stop you getting work.