

Living Well Taking Control

Type 2 Diabetes Patient Information

Type 2 diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.

There are two main types of diabetes – type 1 and type 2.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin to maintain a normal blood glucose level, or the body is unable to use the insulin that is produced – known as insulin resistance.

The pancreas (a large gland behind the stomach) produces the hormone insulin, which moves glucose from your blood into your cells, where it's converted into energy. In type 2 diabetes, there are several reasons why the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin. This means that glucose stays in the blood and isn't used as fuel for energy. It's far more common than type 1 diabetes (when the pancreas does not produce any insulin). Untreated diabetes can damage your organs, so it's important that it's diagnosed as early as possible.

A growing problem

Type 2 diabetes is often associated with obesity and tends to be diagnosed in older people. It's estimated that more than 1 in 16 people in the UK has diabetes (diagnosed or undiagnosed), and this figure is rising rapidly.

There are currently 3.9 million people living with diabetes in the UK, with 90% of those affected having type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term health problems. It's the most common cause of vision loss and blindness in people of working age. Diabetes is also responsible for most cases of kidney failure and lower limb amputation (other than accidents).

People with diabetes are up to **five times** more likely to have cardiovascular disease (such as a stroke) than those without diabetes.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes:

Four of the main risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes are:

- age – being over the age of 40 (over 25 for south Asian people)
- genetics – having a close relative with the condition (parent, brother or sister)
- weight – being overweight or obese

- ethnicity – being of south Asian, Chinese, African-Caribbean or black African origin (even if you were born in the UK)

Other risks

Your risk of developing type 2 diabetes is also increased if your blood glucose level is higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes.

This is sometimes called "pre-diabetes" – doctors sometimes call it impaired fasting glycaemia (IFG) or impaired glucose tolerance (IGT).

Pre-diabetes can progress to type 2 diabetes if you don't take preventative steps, such as making lifestyle changes. These include eating healthily, losing weight (if you're overweight) and taking plenty of regular exercise.

Women who have had gestational diabetes during pregnancy also have a greater risk of developing diabetes in later life.

What you can do

If you're at risk of type 2 diabetes, you may be able to prevent it developing by making lifestyle changes.

You should:

- eat a healthy, balanced diet
- lose weight (if you're overweight) and maintain a healthy weight
- stop smoking (if you smoke)
- drink alcohol in moderation
- take plenty of regular exercise

If you already have type 2 diabetes, it may be possible to control your symptoms by making the above changes. This will also minimise your risk of developing complications.

As type 2 diabetes usually gets worse, you may eventually need medication (usually tablets) to keep your blood glucose at normal levels.

Diabetes can have serious health consequences, including heart disease and blindness. But with careful management you can reduce your risk.

For more information see NHS Choices website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Diabetes-type2/Pages/Introduction.aspx>