

What is Type 2 diabetes?

Diabetes is a common condition where there is too much glucose in the blood. There are two main types of diabetes, Type 1 diabetes which usually begins in childhood or youth, and Type 2 diabetes which mainly affects adults. A third is gestational diabetes which occurs in pregnant women.

Glucose is the energy source which fuels all the activities of our body cells. Glucose is made when carbohydrate or starchy foods are eaten. The amount of glucose in the blood is normally kept within narrow limits by a hormone, insulin, which is produced by the pancreas.

Type 2 diabetes

In people with Type 2 diabetes the pancreas produces some insulin. It is however, either not enough for the body's requirements or is unable to act efficiently because its action is blocked. This differs from Type 1 diabetes in which the pancreas stops producing insulin altogether.

Insulin works by allowing glucose which is in the blood to enter cells where it is burnt up as energy. Glucose which is not needed for energy at once is stored away in the liver to be used later. To let the glucose enter the cell, insulin acts a bit like a key unlocking a door.



Type 2 diabetes, (also called non insulin dependent), is the more common type of diabetes and accounts for about 85% of all cases. This type of diabetes tends to occur in people who are:

- over 40 years old
- overweight
- have a family history of diabetes

When insulin levels are too low, or are not able to work properly, too much glucose stays in the blood and cannot be put to use by the cells for energy production. The body tries to compensate for the lack of energy by breaking down stores of fat and protein converting them into more glucose. The level of glucose in the blood continues to rise and eventually spills over into the urine.

Symptoms of diabetes

1. Some of the glucose is removed by the kidneys causing the passage of large amounts urine. You may feel **thirsty** and **very dehydrated** and need to **pass urine often** and in large quantities.
2. You may feel **tired** for no obvious reason.
3. The body cannot use the energy in food properly so an alternative source of energy must be found. The body stores of fat and protein are broken down to release glucose which results in gradual **weight loss**.

The main signs of diabetes are:

- Frequent passing of urine
- Increased thirst
- Tiredness
- Loss of weight
- Blurred vision

The onset of symptoms related to Type 2 diabetes are usually gradual. It may be several years before they are noticeable enough to go to a doctor. In the long term a high level of glucose which stays in the blood can cause damage to various tissues in the body, including the eyes and kidneys.

Treatment

There are three main ways of treating Type 2 diabetes.

- Diet – low in sugar, salt, fat; high in fibre
- Diet and tablets
- Diet and insulin injections

Some people wrongly think of Type 2 diabetes as “mild” as they may not need insulin injections. This is **not** true. Diabetes must be controlled carefully if serious health complications such as hardening of the arteries, kidney damage or poor eyesight are to be avoided.

Dietary guidelines

Research over the last 10-15 years has shown the importance of maintaining a diet which is high in starchy carbohydrates and fibre whilst low in sugar, salt and fat.

The aim is to keep blood glucose levels as near to normal as possible. This means avoiding excessive quantities of sugary foods which will make the blood glucose level rise too quickly.

Increasing the amount of fibre will help to slow down the rate of absorption of sugar from foods and help to maintain a more even level of blood glucose.



What is Type 2 diabetes?

The key to a healthy balanced diet is:

1. Reduce the amount of sugar, fat and salt intake by using "low" alternatives and herbs to add flavours.
2. Eat regular meals based on starchy carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes, pasta, cereals, rice, chapatis or yams.
3. Grill, steam or dry roast food instead of frying or roasting in oil or fat.
4. Aim to eat at least five portions of vegetables and/or fruit a day (potatoes do not count, a glass of unsweetened fruit juice is a portion).
5. Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of water a day and only drink alcohol in moderation (14 units per week for a woman, 21 units per week for a man).

This leaflet gives only a very brief explanation of dietary requirements. More detailed information can be obtained from your doctor or healthcare professional.

Leaflets available from Hypoguard

- 1 What is Type 2 diabetes
- 2 What is Type 1 diabetes
- 3 Long-term complications of diabetes
- 4 Hypos, hypers and all that
- 5 Monitoring diabetes
- 6 Diabetes and exercise
- 7 Work and driving with diabetes
- 8 Smoking and alcohol with diabetes
- 9 On holiday with diabetes
- 10 Men and Women with diabetes

Please call the **Hypoguard Freephone Information Line: 0800 371 957** for further copies of this leaflet or other leaflets in the series.

Diabetes management made simple

Hypoguard have a range of blood glucose monitoring systems specifically designed to help people with diabetes manage their glucose levels in their homes. If you would like any information about them, please call the Hypoguard Freephone Information Line: **0800 371 957** 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday or visit our web site at www.hypoguard.com

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P/N SL011/5 Rev 07/02

Remember

1. Eat regularly.
2. Keep to a healthy diet – one low in sugar, fat and salt whilst high in fibre.
3. Exercise regularly to assist weight control.
4. Monitor and record your glucose levels to identify trends.

