

Long-term complications

Diabetes affects many parts of your body, and over time a raised blood glucose level can lead to serious problems. The good news is that tight control of your diabetes, in other words keeping your blood glucose levels as close to normal as possible, will substantially reduce the risk of you developing complications.

Your eyes

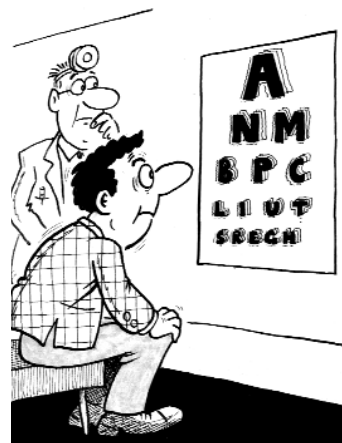
Around the time of diagnosis, many people with diabetes experience blurred vision. This is a short term complication caused by an increased level of glucose in the lens of the eye. Once the blood glucose level is corrected the blurring goes away.

Long-term eye problems can develop after about five years with Type 1 diabetes, and at any time with Type 2 diabetes, so it is vital that you have regular eye examinations (every year).

Retinopathy is potentially the most serious eye complication. This is where tiny abnormal blood vessels begin to form within the retina. Retinopathy can be detected, even at early stages, before eye problems are noticed. Treatment with lasers is usually effective if undertaken before sight has deteriorated too seriously.

Cataracts are also common in people with diabetes. This is where debris inside the lens of the eye causes blurred vision.

- **Have your eyes tested and examined annually**



Your feet

Years of high blood glucose levels can lead to nerve damage, (neuropathy), which typically affects your hands and feet. The loss of sensation in your feet may be very gradual so you may not be aware that you are injuring your feet with cuts and blisters.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Keep your feet clean and dry**
- **Wear shoes that are well-fitting and comfortable**
- **Do not cut your toenails too short – follow the natural line of your toe**
- **Avoid extreme heat or cold**
- **Corns and callouses should only be treated by a podiatrist or chiropodist – not by yourself**

Blood vessel damage

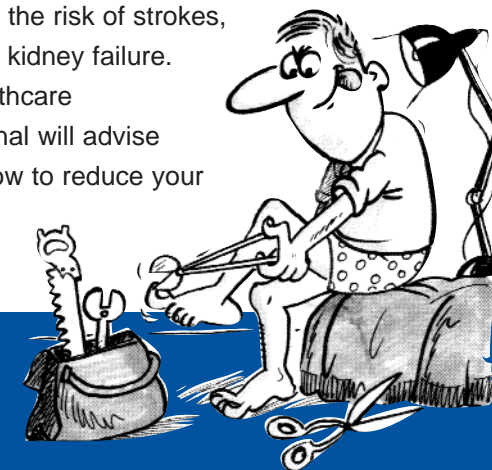
Diabetes can cause an increased rate of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) in which the walls of blood vessels gradually thicken and harden.

The group of blood vessels which supply the heart, (coronary arteries), are particularly at risk of atherosclerosis. If these become blocked the heart muscle may be damaged and the person may experience a heart attack.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Do not smoke**
- **Reduce your intake of fat, salt and cholesterol**
- **Exercise regularly**
- **Maintain a healthy weight (lose weight if necessary)**
- **Have regular medical checkups**

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is more likely to develop in people with diabetes. Combined with diabetes, it increases the risk of strokes, heart and kidney failure. Your healthcare professional will advise you on how to reduce your blood pressure,



Nerve damage

Nerve damage, or neuropathy, is found in people with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. It is thought to affect about 85% of people with diabetes at some time in their life.

The damage may be as a result of damaged blood vessels which supply the nerves, or due to a breakdown of the fatty insulating coat which protects the nerves.

Nerve damage can lead to numbness, tingling, prickling, sharp pains or cramps in hands and feet. Some people may also experience sensitivity to touch, loss of balance/coordination and loss of sexual response.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Maintain tight blood glucose control
- Take medications as prescribed
- Tell your doctor about any tingling, loss of feeling or sexual problems

Kidney damage

People with diabetes can be vulnerable to kidney damage for a variety of reasons. Hardening of the arteries, described earlier, can affect vessels in the kidneys so they are unable to function as well as before. In addition, urinary tract infections are more likely.

Treatment is available by detecting any changes in your kidneys very early on. For this reason at least once a year your urine will be screened.

Remember.....

Even if you feel well it is important to check your blood glucose level regularly to make sure it is not too high. Good control of diabetes often prevents the development of the complications described in this leaflet.

Leaflets available from Hypoguard

- 1 What is non insulin dependent diabetes
- 2 What is insulin dependent diabetes
- 3 Long-term complications of diabetes
- 4 Hypos, hyperts 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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