

## Factsheet

# Raising awareness of Diabetes and its effects in the workplace

**Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high. It is also known as diabetes mellitus.**

## What is Diabetes?

There are two main types of diabetes, referred to as type 1 and type 2.

Type 1 diabetes is often referred to as insulin-dependent diabetes. It is also sometimes known as juvenile diabetes or early-onset diabetes because it often develops before the age of 40, usually during the teenage years.

In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas (a small gland behind the stomach) does not produce any insulin. Insulin is a hormone that regulates blood glucose levels. If the amount of glucose in the blood is too high, it can seriously damage the body's organs.

People with type 1 diabetes will need to take insulin injections for life.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin to function properly, or the body's cells don't react to insulin. This is known as insulin resistance.

Type 2 diabetes is far more common than type 1 diabetes, typically in those over 40 years. In the UK, about 90% of all adults with diabetes have type 2 diabetes. It is more common in people of South Asian, African-Caribbean or Middle Eastern descent.

## Is there a lot of it about?

Three million people in the UK have now been diagnosed with diabetes, says charity Diabetes UK, which warns this new high could create a huge burden on the NHS.

Most of these cases are type 2 diabetes, caused by the UK's ageing population and rapidly rising numbers of overweight and obese people.

Another 850,000 people are thought to have undiagnosed type 2 diabetes.

## What effect may it have in the workplace?

In most cases a person living with diabetes can perform as usual at work especially if their diabetes is stable and well-controlled. Some times someone newly diagnosed will take some time for this to become the case.

Note that:

- People with **insulin-controlled** diabetes are precluded from some types of employment, such as working for the emergency services or driving HGV's buses and taxis.
- Strenuous activity, irregular meal patterns, especially missing a meal or snack, and shift working can adversely affect someone with diabetes.
- Employees travelling abroad for work would need to notify their employers insurance of their diabetes.
- People with insulin-controlled diabetes and those with complications need to inform DVLA.
- Diabetes can cause a higher level of fatigue in workers.

## What should I be doing to support a person who has diabetes in my workplace?

- Even though diabetes is covered under the DDA (and therefore under the Equality Act 2010) most people with diabetes do not consider themselves disabled.
- There is no obligation to disclose it to a colleague or manager, but it helps if they do so that safe systems of work can be in place and any adjustments made.
- People with diabetes may need a private space to inject their insulin treatment and space to store their medication.
- People with diabetes may have to manage their meetings and work to ensure their mealtimes and break times are regularly taken.
- First aiders should be trained to recognise hypoglycaemia (blood sugar too low) and hyperglycaemia (blood sugar too high). These are the two "episodes" that someone with diabetes may have. Usually it is blood sugar too low and then you should encourage them to eat or drink something sweet, such as a sugary drink or sweets.

## What should I be thinking about if I am the manager of someone with diabetes?

Consider the suggestions above and think particularly about whether any adjustments are needed now or may be needed in future so that you can plan and the person with diabetes will feel more confident and re-assured.

Remember to remind them about NHSBT's independent confidential Employee Assistance programme too. (See below).

## Where can I find out more information?

If you would like more information then please contact your nearest Disability Advocate.

[http://nhsbtweb/group\\_services/human\\_resources/equality\\_and\\_diversity/information\\_for\\_disabled\\_employees/disability\\_advocate\\_scheme.asp](http://nhsbtweb/group_services/human_resources/equality_and_diversity/information_for_disabled_employees/disability_advocate_scheme.asp)

More help from: <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/>  
Diabetes UK

See our Health and Wellbeing pages on the Intranet:

[http://nhsbtweb/group\\_services/health\\_and\\_safety/health\\_and\\_wellbeing/index.asp](http://nhsbtweb/group_services/health_and_safety/health_and_wellbeing/index.asp)

OH Assist are the provider of our occupational health programme that includes:

[www.ohportal.co.uk](http://www.ohportal.co.uk) – online portal with a wealth of information on healthy lifestyles. To access this you will need to request for an account to be set up by emailing the [Health and Safety team](#). A user guide for the OH Assist portal can be found by clicking [here](#).

OH Assist helpline – call [0845 601 8029](tel:08456018029) and OH experts will support you on all types of issues including health-related absences. OH Assist can also be contacted by email using [nhsbt@ohassist.com](mailto:nhsbt@ohassist.com).

Sharpsline - call [0845 371 0572](tel:08453710572) if you had a needle stick injury or contact with blood and require assistance. To download the Sharps poster, please [click here](#).

Details of Occupational Health services provided by OH Assist to NHSBT can be found by [clicking here](#).

In addition OH Assist also offer pre-employment placement service, an immunisation programme, wellness clinics and physiotherapy services.

Details regarding these services are available by contacting the OH Assist helpline.

Medical Helpdesk, Self-Referral and General Information – [0845 601 3247](tel:08456013247). This can be used to discuss general information regarding health issues and track progress of referrals.

For **carers** and anyone else who has anxieties about family, relationships, personal or financial matters we have our fantastic free confidential **Employee Assistance Programme, Employee Care managed by Capita independently from NHSBT**. You can telephone 0800 716017 to speak to someone and you can access a wealth of information on line. Please visit [www.employeeecare.com](http://www.employeeecare.com). To log in all you need to do is type the pin code 72992 into both the access code and password boxes. This is an incredibly valuable benefit to all staff and it's free to you as NHSBT employees!