

DIABETES SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

July 2021

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Welcome to your July issue of the Diabetes Support Newsletter.

We've packed this issue full of articles and information designed to raise awareness around topics including hydration, foot checks, blood glucose levels and symptoms of diabetes.

Support service updates

DESMOND

Diabetes Education and Self-Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed

- Group education programme for individuals with type 2 diabetes
- Aims to improve understanding and promote self-management of the condition
- Can be accessed by anyone over the age of 18 with a confirmed diagnosis
- Free to access and delivered across Nottinghamshire County
- Delivered over 6 hours, via video conference or in person once face-to-face education resumes
- Referral can be via a Practice Nurse/GP or self-referral


For further information or to process a Nottinghamshire County self-referral please contact us:

Telephone: 01623 484837

Email: desmondreferrals@nottshc.nhs.uk

Keep in touch with us via social media:

 Twitter – [@DESMONDNotts](https://twitter.com/DESMONDNotts)

 Facebook – [@desmondnotts](https://www.facebook.com/desmondnotts)

For Nottingham City residents, please contact:

Telephone: 03001310300 option 5

Email: NCP.IntegratedDiabetesService@nhs.net

DAFNE

Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating

- Group education programme for individuals over 17 with type 1 diabetes on multiple daily injections, which aims to improve understanding and promote self-management of the condition
- Free to access across Nottinghamshire County and City
- Face-to-face courses are delivered by 2 trained educators over a 5-day period (Monday-Friday) or 1 day a week over 5 weeks
- Remote courses are delivered by 1 trained educator over a 6-week period with a blended learning approach of self-directed learning via an online course and weekly virtual group meetings
- Referral can be discussed with an individual's diabetes team at the hospital or GP surgery

DIABETES SUPPORT GROUPS

The aim of a support group is to bring people together in our local area to share experiences of living with diabetes and to get practical tips from others about how to live well with the condition.

Talking, listening, exploring feelings and helping people to reflect and learn are all parts of peer support. However, for some people, just knowing that there are other people who are sharing some of the same experiences is most important.

Peer support is different from services provided by professionals. It does not try to find solutions to every problem or give direct advice. Peer support is about giving people a place and time where they can hear from other people in a similar situation and make their own choices.

If you are interested in attending a local support group, please discuss with your GP practice or diabetes team.

How to stay hydrated

As we move into the summer months and warmer weather staying adequately hydrated becomes even more important!

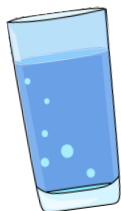
Keeping hydrated by drinking enough is vital for good health. If you become dehydrated it can start to cause a lack of concentration, headaches, tiredness, dizziness, light-headedness, and confusion. If you are dehydrated for a long time it can start affecting your kidney function, which will then affect your body's ability to remove waste products.

If you feel thirsty it's important to have a drink, as this is your body's way of telling you that you need fluid. Taking note of the colour of your urine is also a good way to check how hydrated you are. Your urine should be pale straw colour or clear. If your urine is dark yellow or orange this is an indicator to drink more and if it's dark orange or brown this is a sign you are severely dehydrated and drinking plenty of fluid is essential to restore dehydration.

What counts towards your fluid intake?

WATER

Drinking water is the easiest way to get enough fluid - consider adding sugar-free squash to flavour or add slices of fruit to make it more interesting.



SUGAR-FREE FIZZY DRINKS

These also count towards your fluid requirements and won't have an impact on your blood glucose levels so can be a great swap from full sugar varieties.



JUICES AND SMOOTHIES

Fruit juice is a nutritious drink as it contains vitamins, minerals, and fibre. However, it is very concentrated in sugar which will result in a sharper rise in blood glucose levels. One 150ml glass of fruit juice or a smoothie is a portion and would be the maximum recommended amount to consume each day.

TEA AND COFFEE

Tea and coffee can be another good way of staying well hydrated. However, if you drink a lot of tea and coffee you should be aware of the amount of caffeine you are consuming.



Symptoms and when to get checked

It is important to be aware of symptoms of type 2 diabetes even after a confirmed diagnosis, as they can be a sign of consistently high blood glucose levels. Common symptoms include:

Frequent urination – The body will try to 'flush out' any excess glucose in the urine, which can mean more frequent trips to the toilet and waking up in the night.

Thirst – Going to the toilet more often means the body is getting rid of a lot of water, which can cause you to feel very thirsty.

Recurrent or long-lasting infections – Bugs and bacteria love sugar, so high blood glucose levels can mean wounds and cuts take longer to heal. Frequent urination due to high blood glucose levels can also cause more and longer-lasting infections such as thrush and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Most people living with well controlled diabetes won't get ongoing symptoms such as these. If you are experiencing consistent or ongoing symptoms, please make an appointment to see your GP, nurse or diabetes team as your medication or dosages may need reviewing.

Blurred vision – High blood glucose levels can cause the lens of the eye to change shape, which can affect the eye's ability to focus. This is different to retinopathy, which is a possible long-term effect of diabetes.

Weight loss – Unintentional weight loss can be a symptom because the body is getting rid of some excess calories in the urine. It can also be because the body starts to break down other energy stores as it cannot use glucose for energy. This is not a recommended method of weight management as high blood glucose levels can be damaging.

Feeling tired or fatigued – Feeling more tired than usual can be due to getting up a lot in the night to go to the toilet, or because the body isn't able to get glucose into the cells as easily for use as energy.

Q&A with a podiatrist

When you have diabetes, foot problems can occur if the nerves and blood vessels supplying your feet are damaged. This can affect the feeling in your feet (peripheral neuropathy) and the circulation in your feet (ischaemia). These changes can be very gradual, and you may not notice them. It is important for you to have a foot check every year, look after your feet, and know what is 'normal' for you.

How should I be checking my own feet? What am I looking out for?

It helps to create a routine of checking your feet daily and getting to know what is 'normal' for your feet. Take off your shoes and socks and look at the tops, bottoms, sides, heels and in-between the toes. You are looking out for any new blisters, cuts, cracks or breaks in the skin, colour changes, heat, swelling, discharge. Check if the temperature is the same in both feet. If you struggle to reach your feet, or your vision is reduced, then it might help to use a mirror, or ask a friend, family member or carer to help. There is a mirror designed specifically for foot checks (called a 'Solesee') which you can buy. It is also important to check your footwear before you put it on. Check the outer soles in case anything sharp (i.e. glass, nails, screws) has pierced it. Tip them upside down, in case anything has fallen inside, and check the inside lining, seams and insoles for wear or loose material.

What is the best way to treat a foot injury or cut/wound?

You should clean any breaks in the skin, minor cuts or blisters with water and sterile gauze, cover with a sterile dressing (not Elastoplast), and check them daily. If they do not heal within a few days, or if you notice any signs of infection in the area (redness, heat, swelling, pus, smell or pain) then you should contact your GP or podiatrist for advice and review. If you have an injury where your foot becomes red, hot and swollen (especially if you have neuropathy), you should rest taking the weight off your foot, and contact your GP or 111.

What are the signs of a serious foot problem? What should I do if I think I have a serious foot problem?

When we talk about 'serious' foot problems, we generally mean foot problems that require urgent attention. These include any:

- Break in the skin or cut that doesn't heal within a few days
- Signs of infection (redness, heat, swelling, pus, smell or pain)
- New pus or bleeding from an ulcer, wound, corn, callus or toenails
- Changes in colour to your feet (red/blue/purple/black)
- Sudden change in foot shape
- Unusual pain, heat or swelling in your feet

Infections can spread very quickly and can become severe and even limb and/or life-threatening if not treated. If you are concerned that you may have infection, then ask for help as soon as possible.

If you notice any of these problems, then you should contact your GP surgery or podiatrist as soon as possible. Explain that you have diabetes and a foot problem and require urgent review. If you are unable to contact your GP surgery or podiatrist, then you should contact NHS 111, either by dialling 111 from your phone, or going to [111.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

What are the symptoms/signs of diabetes related foot damage to look out for?

Peripheral Neuropathy is nerve damage caused by raised blood sugar levels (especially over long periods). Signs and symptoms of neuropathy include numbness, tingling, burning, pins and needles, and reduce sweating in your feet.

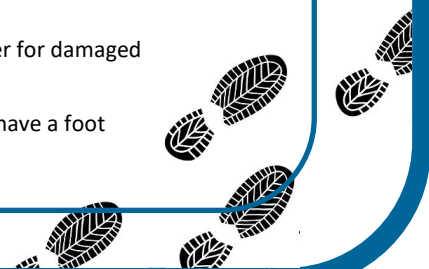
This means that you may not feel damage or pain to your feet (like the skin being rubbed, cut or burnt, or standing on something sharp, like glass or a nail) and skin can become very dry and crack or split easily. You may not be aware if problems such as blisters, ulcers and infections develop.

Ischaemia is when the blood flow to the legs and feet is reduced (it may also be called peripheral arterial or vascular disease). It is caused by raised blood sugar levels, age, smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Signs and symptoms can include pain, cramp and aching in feet and legs (normally starts when walking), and pale, cold feet, but it can often have no symptoms.

If the blood vessels are damaged, the blood supply to the skin is reduced so it can take longer for damaged areas to heal.

These changes can be very gradual, and you may not notice them. It is important for you to have a foot check every year, look after your feet, and know what is 'normal' for you.



A focus on fruit

We all know that fruit and vegetables are good for us, and that we should be eating a good variety and aiming for five or more portions a day. But with a diabetes diagnosis, fruit can sometimes become confusing as people are told it contains too much sugar or is too sweet. Read on to find out the answer to some of the most common fruit questions.

Why do we eat fruit?

Aside from being tasty, fruit is important for overall health, regardless of whether there is a diabetes diagnosis or not. Fruit (and vegetables) are a good source of fibre, vitamins, and minerals, all of which are essential to our health.

What counts towards our 5-a-day?

Fresh fruit

Frozen fruit

Dried fruit

Tinned fruit in juice

Fruit juice and smoothies

What is a portion of fruit?



Does fruit contain sugar?

The short answer is yes, fruit does contain a form of sugar called fructose. However, this type of sugar in whole fruit is not counted towards our 'free sugar' limits for the day. Free sugars are those which have been added to foods and drinks (for example cakes, biscuits, sauces) and natural sugars found in syrups and honey, fruit juices and smoothies.

Natural sugars found in whole fruit, milk, and dairy products do not count as free sugars and so don't need to be limited.

Can someone with diabetes have fruit?

There should be no need to avoid fruit once you have a diabetes diagnosis. However, it might be helpful to keep in mind a few considerations when it comes to fruit, to help minimise the impact on blood glucose levels:

Consider portion size – remember that one portion of fresh fruit is 80g, or a small handful. One portion of dried fruit is much less though – just 30g.

Have one portion at time – rather than having two or three portions in one go, spread these portions out across the day so you are just having one at a time.

Choose whole fruit rather than fruit juice or smoothies – fruit juice and smoothies have a much higher GI (glycaemic index), meaning they cause a more rapid spike in blood glucose levels. Whole fruit has a lower GI as it still contains fibre and so takes longer to break down.

More information and support around eating well, please refer to:

DESMOND

See support service updates.

Your Health Your Way

Available across Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield & Ashfield, Newark & Sherwood

<https://yourhealthnotts.co.uk/>

0115 772 2515

Dietitian

Nottingham City patients can request a referral to see a dietitian if looking for support with weight management.

What can affect blood glucose levels?

Your blood glucose level measurement shows you how much glucose you have in your blood at that moment in time. Blood glucose levels go up and down throughout the day and for people living with diabetes these changes are more significant and happen more often than in individuals who don't have diabetes.

You can check your blood glucose levels yourself throughout the day but not everyone with diabetes needs to check their levels like this. If you take certain medication, like insulin or sulphonylureas (e.g. Gliclazide), checking your blood glucose levels is a vital part of living with diabetes. **Always talk to your diabetes team if you're not sure** whether that applies to you – they will give you advice on whether you need to self-test and how often.

The higher your blood sugar levels are and the longer they're at a higher level, the greater the risk of developing serious diabetes complications. Therefore, however you manage your diabetes, it is important to be aware of your personal results, in particular the HbA1c result which measures your average blood glucose levels from the previous few months. Everyone with diabetes is entitled to have an HbA1c blood test as a minimum annually.

What can cause high blood glucose levels (hyperglycaemia)?

- Missing a dose of your medication
- Consuming more carbohydrate than either your body or medication, or both, can cope with
- Feeling stressed
- Feeling unwell
- Over-treating a hypo



The above is not an exhaustive list and there may be other factors that could affect blood glucose levels e.g. weather, menstruation, other medications etc.

Overeating and not being active enough can also lead to high blood glucose levels. Maintaining high levels of blood glucose makes it even more difficult for your body to produce the insulin needed to process it.

If you are taking insulin or sulphonylureas, e.g. Gliclazide, and are therefore at risk of low blood glucose levels (hypos) visit [this link](#) for more information on why your blood glucose levels may drop too low and how to treat a hypo.

Getting active this summer

As restrictions start to ease let's focus on the ways we can keep active this summer!

WALKING

Nature reserves and parks – Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City boasts several nature reserves and parks. In line with restrictions easing many of the parks now have facilities and cafes open to be able to make the most of your day. As the sites often have free entry, they can be the perfect place to go to be active and perhaps stop for a picnic!

Walking Groups – Nottinghamshire has a wide range of walking groups that cater to all level of ability. Some of the walking groups remain postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions but a number have resumed.

AgeUK and Nottingham City Council have come together to run '**Best Foot Forward**' guided walks, designed to suit all abilities. The walks are free with no need to book in advance. More information can be found on their [website](#).

'**Walking for Health**', run by the Ramblers, is a national walking charity aimed at encouraging people to become more active. They run England's largest network for health walks and details of the Nottinghamshire walks can be found by searching for your area [here](#). Nottinghamshire Ramblers also have a dedicated [website](#) with more information.

WATERWAYS WELLBEING

With the aim to make Nottinghamshire's waterways and towpaths accessible to all, this initiative provides free opportunities for canoeing, paddle boarding, photography, gardening and walks. More information can be found [here](#).

CLASSES, GROUPS AND ORGANISED SPORT

Contact your local gym leisure or community centre to what classes they are currently offering in line with restrictions. National organisations such as Parkrun have up-to-date information on their [website](#).

FURTHER SUPPORT

The **NHS website** has a section dedicated to supporting people to get more active. They provide some information around physical activity, as well as ideas to help you get active. More information can be found on their [website](#). Their '**Fitness Studio**' is a great [resource](#) for those looking for free online workouts to follow.

'**Your Health Your Way**' is a service available for County residents (not City) and can provide further support around getting active, weight management, food choices, drinking less alcohol and stopping smoking. For physical activity they provide a range of services including group classes, guided walks, family sessions and exercise buddies. Information for your area can be found on their [website](#).