

# Diabetes and work/workers

BHSEA

[Niti.pall@nhs.net](mailto:Niti.pall@nhs.net)

Board member IDF e

Chair Diabetes Prevention Forum

# The statistics

- Recent statistics indicate that 2.8 million people in the UK have diabetes, while an estimated half a million additional people have the condition but are unaware that they have it. The number of people with diabetes in the UK is expected to rise to more than 4 million by 2025. Currently, the condition costs the NHS around £9 billion a year

# What the employer needs to know when s/he employs someone with diabetes

- It's been estimated that just under **5 per cent** of the current UK workforce of 29 million people have diabetes. It's a very common lifelong health condition that doesn't hinder people's ability to get a job or to keep one. People with diabetes should be assessed on their individual ability to do a job and not be discriminated against simply because they have the condition. Nevertheless, some key areas of employment have restrictions on people with insulin-dependent diabetes. These include:
  - driving long goods vehicles or those carrying passengers, i.e. jobs where people need to have a Group 2 licence
  - the armed forces
  - jobs in the aviation industry, such as airline pilots and, in some cases, cabin crew and air traffic control personnel
  - working offshore, for example on oil rigs and ships.
- There can also be restrictions in other jobs, for example the emergency services, the railway industry and public carriage services. The level of restriction varies across the UK and mainly lies with the individual local councils.

# WHAT IS DIABETES

- **Diabetes is a chronic condition whereby the body is not able to regulate its glucose levels due to abnormal metabolism. There are two main types of diabetes.**
- **Type 1- is the less common of the two. In this condition, the body is not able to make insulin on its own to manage blood glucose levels. It usually affects children and young adults.**
- **Type 2- is much more common and mainly affects adults. In this condition, the body doesn't produce enough insulin to manage blood glucose levels and/or the cells in the body can't use it correctly. Although not fully understood, certain factors increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. These include; age, weight, body fat distribution, lack of physical activity, family history and ethnicity.**


# Why Worry About Diabetes?

- Diabetes is serious. No one has “a little bit of sugar,” just as no one is a “little bit pregnant.” High blood glucose causes serious health problems..
- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death
- Heart disease and stroke are two to four times more common in those with diabetes.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of end stage kidney disease.
- More than half the amputations of the feet and legs are due to diabetes.
- Gum disease occurs in 30 percent of those over age 19 who have diabetes.
- Sixty to seventy percent of those with diabetes have some nerve damage.

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Common symptoms of both types of diabetes are:
- Increased thirst
- Passing water frequently, especially at night
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Loss of weight
- Genital itching or recurrent thrush
- In type 1 diabetes, less common symptoms are:
- Cramps
- Constipation
- Blurred vision
- Recurrent skin infections
- In type 2 diabetes, symptoms may go unnoticed for years - only when complications of diabetes, such as foot ulceration or blurred vision, occur is diabetes diagnosed. Remember, all the symptoms may not be present. Whenever any of these symptoms arise, it's important to be tested for diabetes

# Effects of high blood sugars

- Blurred vision
  - Muscle aches
  - Weakness of proximal muscles
  - Tiredness
- 

# Effects of medication

- METFORMIN –diarrhoea and tummy upsets
- Sulphonyl ureas –low blood sugars
- Insulin –low blood sugars
- Faint , feeling hungry , confusion , passing out ,  
fitting



# Effects of diabetes on work

- Often people with diabetes prefer to “keep quiet” about their diabetes, fearing they maybe discriminated against.
- However, there are several reasons why this is **not** a good idea.
- **1.** If time off work is needed for medical reasons you as an employer are more likely to understand if you know .
- **2.** If a person is taking insulin and you employee is responsible for other people’s safety, you must know . It may be a legal requirement of the contract.
- **3.** If a person has hypo at work it is important that as an employer / colleagues know how to help

# Contd

- Meals need to be at a regular time and if breaks for snacks are needed arrangements need to be made . Having a hypo would be much worse.
- If the food in the canteen is not suitable for the diet other arrangements need to be allowed like bringing own food .
- **Advice for SHIFT WORK**
- If you work shifts, you should discuss this with your doctor so that an individual plan can be tailored to your needs.
- If you take insulin, and are able to use a pen system, most people find it easier to take a long acting insulin once a day and to use a pen injection system with fast-acting insulin before each meal.
- If your diabetes is controlled by diet alone or diet and tablets, shift work should not pose a problem— simply eat your day-time diet at night and vice

# Why look after diabetes

- Diabetes increases the risk of developing certain other health problems,
- including heart and circulatory diseases,
- so it's important to prevent these conditions developing
- Regular checks are encouraged
- Good control means more productive employment years

# Useful links

- [http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Living\\_with\\_diabetes/Employment-and-diabetes-/?gclid=CPnCqdGukLYCFcHHtAod600AuA](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Living_with_diabetes/Employment-and-diabetes-/?gclid=CPnCqdGukLYCFcHHtAod600AuA)
- DUK advocacy pack on employment  
[http://www.diabetes.org.uk/How\\_we\\_help/Advocacy/Advocacy-packs/Your-rights-at-work---discrimination-and-how-to-resolve-it/](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/How_we_help/Advocacy/Advocacy-packs/Your-rights-at-work---discrimination-and-how-to-resolve-it/)
- [http://www.iosh.co.uk/information\\_and\\_resources/our\\_oh\\_toolkit/new\\_page/diabetes.aspx#Employers](http://www.iosh.co.uk/information_and_resources/our_oh_toolkit/new_page/diabetes.aspx#Employers)

➤ Thank you

➤ [Niti.pall@nhs.net](mailto:Niti.pall@nhs.net)

➤ Board member IDF e

➤ Chair Diabetes Prevention Forum