

PATIENT INFORMATION**PAEDIATRIC DIABETES –
Complications of Diabetes**

What are the complications of diabetes?

The complications that can occur are caused by regularly raised blood glucose levels damaging the nerves and blood vessels around the body. You may think that this happens to older people and will not affect you, but complications can affect younger people too. Complications are more likely the longer you have diabetes and also if you have blood glucose levels and an HbA1c that is too high for long periods of time.

What can you do to help delay complications?

- **Work out a plan** – Set personal goals with support from your diabetes team to reduce your HbA1c result – even a drop of 10mmol/mol will reduce the risks. Your overall aim should be to **achieve a HbA1c of 48mmol/mol or under**.
- **Make sure you have your Annual Review** - This will look for early signs of complications. If picked up early, problems can often be treated before they become a more serious concern. Please see the information leaflet about annual reviews for more information.
- **Look after your feet** - Check out the leaflet that tells you about this in more detail.
- **Do not smoke** - This makes the hardening and furring of the blood vessels in your body much worse. If you need help to stop, talk to your diabetes team who can sign post you to specialist advisors.
- **Get plenty of exercise** - Find something you enjoy and get active.
- **Eat a healthy diet** - Eat a balanced diet with fruit and vegetables and try to reduce the levels of saturated fat to help maintain a healthy weight - talk to your dietician if you have concerns.

What are the complications of diabetes?

Cardiovascular complications

People with diabetes are more at risk of heart disease and strokes because having higher blood glucose levels over time increases the risk of furring and hardening of the blood vessels which occurs as we all get older.

Diabetic Foot Problems

Foot damage by ulceration happens because regular high blood glucose levels can cause nerve and blood vessel damage. This means an injury to the foot may not be felt and can then develop into a serious infection. Due to the poor blood vessel supply, it may not heal properly and could develop into an ulcer.

Eye Disease

Diabetic retinopathy is caused by damage to the small blood vessels at the back to the eye. Early detection and treatment can help prevent long-term sight problems and blindness.

Kidney Disease

This is also caused by damage to the small blood vessels in the kidneys from regularly having high blood glucose levels and also from high blood pressure, which can occur as you get older. Early detection and treatment can prevent more serious complications such as kidney failure.

Impotence

This is when a man is unable to get an erect penis because of damage to nerves and blood vessels. This can result from having high blood glucose levels for many years. There is help available so do talk to your diabetes team should you need any advice.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.