

# What Is Diabetes?



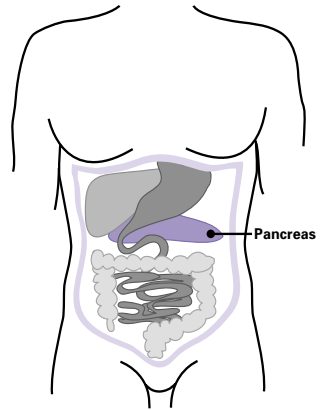
# What is Diabetes?

**Diabetes** is a common condition where the amount of sugar (glucose) in the blood is too high.

Normally the Pancreas produces a substance called Insulin which keeps the blood sugar (glucose) levels in balance.

**In people with Diabetes: -**

- The pancreas has stopped producing insulin
- May not be making enough insulin
- Or the insulin made may not be working properly

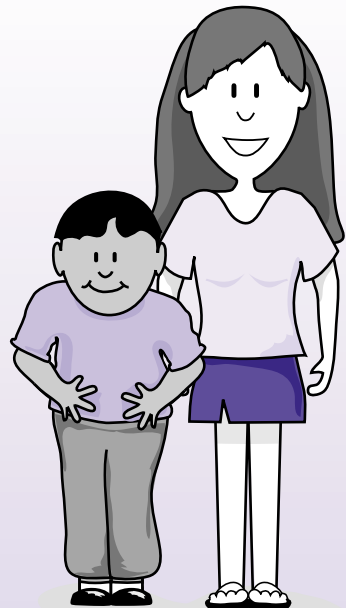


**There are two main types of diabetes:-**

## Type 1 Diabetes

The body has stopped making insulin.

This type of diabetes usually appears in people under the age of 40, often in childhood, but can be found in older people too.



## Type 2 Diabetes

The body is still making insulin but not enough for its needs or the insulin is not working properly. The body may also be 'ignoring' the insulin that is made. This type of Diabetes appears in people over the age of 40, but it can be found in younger people who are at risk.



### Who is at Risk of Type 2 diabetes?

- People who have a family history of diabetes
- People who are overweight
- People who are not physically active
- People of Asian / African or African Caribbean origin

## What are the symptoms of Diabetes?

Any of the following are common symptoms:-

- Thirsty, drinking more than usual
- Passing water more often - especially during the night
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Blurred vision
- Losing weight
- Genital itching or recurrent episodes of thrush

Some people ignore these symptoms blaming stress, old age or busy lives. However, it is important you discuss any of the above with your doctor.



## How is Diabetes Treated?

The normal blood sugar (glucose) range is 4-7mmols. The aim of treatment is to keep your blood sugar as close to this range as possible.

For both Type 1 and 2 Diabetes healthy eating and regular activity are part of the treatment.





**Type 1 Diabetes** will always require daily insulin injections.

**Type 2 Diabetes** is often controlled initially with healthy eating and physical activity. Most people will require tablets and insulin injections may also be necessary in time.

## What happens if Diabetes is not controlled?

Research tells us that if diabetes is not controlled this may increase the risk of:

- Heart disease
- Poor circulation
- Stroke
- Eye damage
- Kidney damage
- Nerve damage
- Impotence

The risk is particularly high for people with diabetes who are overweight, who smoke or who are not physically active.

**Therefore, it is vital that diabetes is kept under control.**

## What can I do to help control my diabetes?

- Eat healthily
- Keep active
- Don't smoke
- Keep your diabetes appointments
- Take your medication as directed by your doctor or nurse



You may also want to check your diabetes control at home, ask your practice nurse about this.



**Author:** Bradford & Airedale  
Diabetes Education Strategy Group  
**Publication date:** Nov 2003  
**Review date:** Oct 2006

MID Ref:03041512  
PDF Ref:05042609

**Airedale NHS Trust, Bradford Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, Airedale PCT, Bradford City Teaching PCT, Bradford South & West PCT and North Bradford PCT working in partnership.**

Created by the Medical Illustration Department  
Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust©