



# Diabetes words

...and what they mean to you



**When we talk about diabetes, we can sometimes use words that are confusing or sound almost the same but mean different things. Here are some examples:**

## **Annual checks**

The minimum levels of healthcare everyone with diabetes should receive.

## **HbA1c**

This is a blood test which shows how much sugar has been in your blood over the past 3 months. An individual target will be agreed between you and your team. You might have seen this previously recorded as a % target, however this has now changed and is recorded as mmol/mol usually aiming for between 48 – 58mmol/mol.

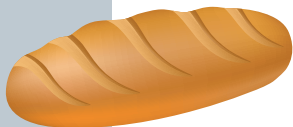
Other tests or appointments include:

- Blood pressure
- Blood fats measured
- Eyes screened
- Feet and legs checked
- Kidney function monitored
- Free flu vaccine



## Carbohydrates (Carbs)

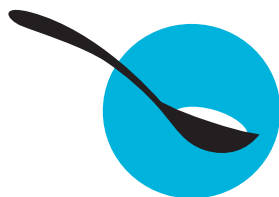
Your body breaks these down into glucose. Some carbohydrates take longer for your body to break down in your stomach to use for energy.



Your diabetes team can advise you further and you can also request an appointment with a dietician for further information.

## Glucose

This is a type of sugar. Your body needs this type of sugar for energy and will convert most of the food and drink you consume into this type of sugar.



## Specialist support

This means extra support we can give including:

- Emotional and psychological support
- Individual dietary advice
- High quality diabetes care (if in hospital)
- The opportunity to talk about any sexual problems related to diabetes
- Help to quit smoking
- Specialist care for family planning



## **Hyperglycaemia (Hyper)**

High blood sugars (greater than 11.1mmol).



## **Hypoglycaemia (Hypo)**

Low blood sugars (less than 4.0mmol).

## **Insulin**

This is a hormone usually made in your body by your pancreas. It controls the amount of sugar in your body. If you have diabetes then either your body does not make enough insulin or it does not work how it should. So you may need to inject insulin to help control the sugar in your body.

## **Ketones**

These are made when your body uses fat stores to make energy. They can make you feel poorly and are an indication that your body cannot access the sugar in your blood for energy. They can be detected in urine (wee) or blood.

## **Lipohypertrophy (Lipos)**

Lumps under the skin caused by build up of extra fat at the site of injections. These can stop the injection working as well, they can be sore and some people don't like the way they look. By injecting at different sites on the body in rotation lipos can be avoided.

## Millimoles (mmols)

This is a measurement used for measuring the sugar in your blood. Blood sugar is measured in millimoles per litre (mmol/L) and the usual range is 4.0 — 7.0mmol.

## Neuropathy

This is damage to your nerves. This can happen if you have high blood sugar over a long time. This can make it harder to sense things, for example something touching your skin.



## Pancreas

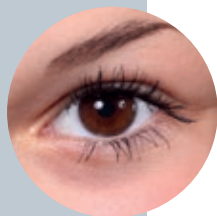
This is an organ in your body located behind your stomach that makes insulin.

## Retinopathy

This is damage to your eyes. This can happen if you have high blood sugar over a long time.

## Sick day rules

This is advice for you to follow during periods of illness. If you are unsure please ask your team as soon as possible.



## Type 1 diabetes

This is usually diagnosed when you are a child or young adult (there are some exceptions).

It is caused by an auto-immune reaction which has destroyed all the insulin producing cells in your pancreas.

If you have this type of diabetes you will always need insulin injections.



## Type 2 diabetes

This type of diabetes mainly starts to occur in adults. Lifestyle choices can increase your risk of developing this type of diabetes.

This can often be controlled with diet only or tablets, however some people are also treated with insulin injections.

A person with Type 2 diabetes who starts insulin treatment does not then develop Type 1 diabetes, as their pancreas still produces some insulin. They are known as having Type 2 diabetes insulin controlled, as their pancreas still produces some insulin.

## Diabetes

I have full blown diabetes, change what I eat  
In with the food savoury, out with the sweet  
Have to change my eating habits for goodness sake  
Out with the toffees, custard and the cake  
Food will be a lot different from now on  
I can look, drool and want but can't act upon  
My sugar level's been going up and up rarely down  
I'll have to search near and far, pasta must be brown  
Can't take the health for granted to stay alive  
I can't eat after seven but I can eat after five  
The nurse at Caffra monitor over twice a day  
Even if I eat dairy products, play havoc with me anyway  
After seven I can eat apples, pears, the odd nut  
Have to be very careful what goes in my gut  
Devastating, to put it mildly, a change in my taste  
Have to make sure that I don't expand my waist

*Extract from a service user poem about living with Diabetes*



## Useful resources

**Diabetes UK:** [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

**JDRF UK:** [www.jdrf.org.uk](http://www.jdrf.org.uk)

**Input Diabetes:** [www.inputdiabetes.org.uk](http://www.inputdiabetes.org.uk)

## Don't forget to access your GP's diabetes team!

**BSMHFT** provide specialist diabetes in-patient services via referral. Ask your lead nurse/care co-ordinator.

## Other leaflets in this series:

**My diabetes**

**Insulin injections**

**What is diabetes?**

**Blood glucose**



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