



MANAGEMENT OF DIABETES

In diabetes, blood sugar levels need to be controlled to avoid hypoglycaemia (blood glucose less than 4mmol/l) and hyperglycaemia (blood glucose more than 11mmol/l when not fasted). Both can lead to coma, fits and even death.

You can monitor your blood glucose by doing a simple test at any moment and this can be done anywhere. Your health care professional can show you how to do the test yourself. Using a finger prick, you place a drop of blood on a special coated strip, which is attached to an electronic meter, and "reads" your blood glucose.

Blood glucose testing can help you understand how food, exercise, and your medication affect your glucose levels. Testing can help you make day-to-day choices about how to balance these things. It can also tell you when your glucose is too low or too high so that you can treat these problems or seek help.

References:
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). Take Charge of Your Diabetes. Retrieved February 17, 2015 from www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/library/takechargeofyourdiabetes.pdf
• Diabetes.co.uk (2015). Managing Diabetes. Retrieved February 17, 2015 from www.diabetes.co.uk/

COMPLICATIONS

These include heart diseases (such as angina, heart attacks, stroke and poor circulation), kidney damage which can lead to kidney failure, foot problems such as non healing ulcers which may lead to amputations, blindness, impotence and even death.

Smoking tobacco greatly increases the risk of complications for people with diabetes. It is important to get help in order to quit smoking.

TYPE 2 DIABETES IS PREVENTABLE!

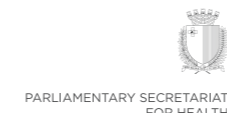
It has been proven that lifestyle interventions can stop, or at least delay, the onset of diabetes in people who are identified as being at risk. The key to prevention is lifestyle changes such as weight reduction (if overweight or obese), increased physical activity (goals of at least 30 minutes of moderate activity at least 5 days per week), and dietary modifications to increase dietary fibre, fewer calorie-dense foods and reduced total and saturated fat intake.

If you are at risk due to excess weight, consider a referral to a:

- Registered nutritionist or dietician
- Structured lifestyle intervention programme, such as those offered by the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate, to help achieve lifestyle changes that include regular physical activity and dietary changes leading to weight loss.

Get regular health checks at your family doctor who will screen for the commoner chronic conditions and Diabetes according to your risks and your family history.

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DIABETES

PROTECT YOUR FUTURE



WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a chronic, and largely preventable, disease that can lead to serious and costly complications. Insulin is a hormone that allows glucose to be used as a fuel for our body cells. Diabetes occurs when problems occur in the production or action of insulin. Type 1 diabetes usually occurs in children or young people. Type 2 diabetes is very common and usually occurs in older people. Gestational Diabetes occurs during pregnancy and may progress to type 2 diabetes later on in life.

Around 11% of adults in Malta have diabetes. More than half of these have uncontrolled diabetes, which increases the risk of serious complications.



RISK FACTORS FOR DEVELOPING TYPE 2 DIABETES

Risk factors that increase the risk of developing diabetes are:

- Older age (starts to increase at the age of 40 years)
- Being overweight and obese
- Eating an unhealthy diet
- Women with gestational diabetes or having had babies weighing > 4kg at birth
- History of cardiovascular disease
- Having high blood glucose levels (either when fasted or when having glucose levels above those for the normal population but below the diabetic range [pre-Diabetes])
- Low birth weight
- Being physically inactive
- Family history of diabetes
- Depression
- High blood pressure and cholesterol



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

Many people have diabetes for a long period of time before their diagnosis is made because they do not have any definite signs and symptoms. These include:

- Feeling very thirsty
- Passing a lot of urine - often at night
- Having blurry vision from time to time
- Feeling very tired much of the time
- Losing weight without trying
- Having very dry skin
- Having sores that are slow to heal
- Getting more infections than usual
- Losing feeling or getting a tingling feeling in the feet
- Vomiting

