

World Diabetes Day



World Diabetes Day (14 November) was created by the International Diabetes Federation and the World Health Organisation in 1991, to draw the attention of the world community towards escalating incidences of diabetes amongst the rich and poor, old and young alike.

Diabetes is a disorder characterised by high blood sugar (blood glucose) levels as a result of insufficient insulin or resistance to the effects of insulin.

There are two forms of diabetes:

- **Type 1:** Usually occurs before the age of 30, and requires insulin treatment.
- **Type 2:** Usually occurs in overweight or obese adults, often with a family history of diabetes, and does not usually require insulin treatment.

Causes

In type 1, the pancreas fails to produce enough insulin, while in type 2, the body becomes resistant to the effects of insulin. In both cases, blood sugar rises because insulin is absent or ineffective.

People at risk of developing diabetes include:

- Blood relatives of people with diabetes.
- People who are overweight or obese.
- People 45 years or older.
- Women who have had gestational diabetes (high blood sugar levels first recognised during pregnancy).
- People with high blood pressure or cholesterol.

Symptoms of diabetes

- Increased thirst.
- Increased urination.
- Weight loss in spite of increased appetite.
- Fatigue.

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Frequent infections.
- Blurred vision.
- Impotence.
- Breath odour.
- Amenorrhoea (no menstrual periods).

Treatment

The aim of treatment is to keep blood sugar levels within normal limits. Diabetics should exercise regularly and follow a low fat, high fibre diet and be careful to avoid excessive sugar.

Medical treatment of type 1 and type 2 differs. Type 1 requires insulin treatment because the pancreas is not producing any. Insulin must be given by injection because stomach acids would destroy it. Type 2 is usually treated by oral medications.

People with diabetes have an increased risk of developing:

- Heart disease including angina and heart attack.
- Stroke.
- Circulation problems.
- Kidney problems and kidney failure.
- Eye problems.
- Infections including skin, bladder, and respiratory.

Good control of blood sugar reduces the risk of developing most of these complications.