

Diabetes - Fact Sheet

Having previously campaigned on these important health subjects, the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department has launched two fresh joint awareness campaigns with POFAS (Post Office First Aid Association), the Stroke Association, Diabetes UK and Royal Mail's Head of Health, utilising the 7,200 First Aiders in Royal Mail Group. Both charities were present at the recent POFAS National First Aid Championship Finals with Exhibition Stands, representatives and lots of information which was distributed. These information sheets are being issued and will hopefully be followed by articles in Voice, Courier, POFAS publications etc as the campaigns progress. Area Health and Safety Representatives are asked to do what they can to distribute information and raise awareness.

New cases of diabetes in Britain have soared by 74 per cent between 1997 and 2003, according to the most recent statistics, suggesting that poor diet and rising levels of obesity are behind the increase in the hormonal illness, which almost doubles the risk of premature death.

Latest figures suggest that the number of people in Britain developing obesity-related diabetes is rising at a faster rate than in America, where the disease has become one of the biggest killers.

The recent findings support figures published last year suggesting that the number of people newly diagnosed with diabetes has more than doubled from 83,000 in 2006 to 167,000 in 2008.

There are 2.5 million people in Britain suffering from the type-2 version of the disease, which is related to sedentary lifestyles and the explosive growth in obesity. Type-2 disease, or late-onset diabetes is usually diagnosed in people over the age of 40, although there are increasing reports of it being diagnosed in younger patients. It is mainly caused by a growing insensitivity to insulin, and is linked to obesity.

Type-1 disease is commonly diagnosed in childhood, and is caused by the loss of cells in the pancreas that produce insulin, the hormone that controls levels of sugar in the bloodstream.

Britain has one of the fastest-growing diabetes epidemics in the world. In 1996, 38 per cent of people newly diagnosed with type-2 diabetes were overweight, and 46 per cent were obese. In 2005, the corresponding figures were 32 per cent and 56 per cent respectively.

Douglas Smallwood, chief executive of the charity Diabetes UK, said: "The latest research is a sad indictment of the state of the UK's health. Sadly, the statistics are not surprising as we know that the soaring rates of type-2 diabetes are strongly linked to the country's expanding waistline. Research shows that losing weight can reduce the risk of developing type-2 diabetes by 58 per cent. It is imperative that we raise awareness of

the importance of eating a healthy, balanced diet and doing at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day if we want to make any headway in defusing the diabetes time-bomb. People who are overweight, under active or over the age of 45 should consider themselves at risk for developing diabetes. "

CWU National Health, Safety & Environment Officer Dave Joyce said "Diabetes is a public health crisis and we're supporting Diabetes UK to raise awareness and promote the importance of early diagnosis and healthy living with diabetes. The CWU has also been working with BT and Royal Mail on joint awareness campaigns. It is imperative that we do what we can to raise awareness of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. Diabetes becomes much worse when the disease is not properly treated and it can lead to serious complications, increasing the risk of fatal heart attack or stroke and other serious medical conditions before retirement age. In many cases, diabetes is not diagnosed in patients until complications develop. The earlier diabetes is diagnosed, the greater the potential of effectively avoiding cardiovascular disease. There are currently over 2.3 million people with diabetes in the UK and there are more than half a million people with diabetes who have the condition and don't know it. This further underlines the desirability of early detection which can be easily accomplished through a simple blood test."

Long-term complications of diabetes include foot and leg ulcers, stroke, blindness, kidney problems, heart disease and damage to the peripheral blood vessels. The disease is treated by changes to lifestyle, medication to lower sugar levels in the blood, or by insulin injections in extreme cases. The NHS spends around £10 million a day on treating diabetes and its effects, around 5% of its total budget. This is predicted to rise to 10% by 2011.

'Measure Up'

If you are white and over 40 years old, or if you're black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group and over 25 years old and have one or more of the following risk factors, you should ask your GP for a test for diabetes:

The family

Having diabetes in the family puts you at risk. The closer the relative is, the greater the risk. So if your mum or dad has diabetes, rather than your aunt or uncle, it's more likely you will develop the condition too.

Ethnicity

African-Caribbean or South Asian people who live in the UK are at least five times more likely to have diabetes than the white population.

Your weight

Not all people with diabetes are over weight but the stats show that over 80 per cent of people diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes are overweight. The more overweight and the more inactive you are the greater your risk. If you don't know whether you're overweight, ask your GP to measure your BMI or take the Diabetes UK's 2 minute test at: <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/measure-up/>

Your waist

Women – if your waist measures 31.5in (80cm) or more you've got an increased risk.
Men – if you're white or black and your waist is 37in (94cm) or more you have an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. If you're an Asian man the figure is 35in (90cm) or more.

To measure your waist, the measurement needs to be taken at the mid-point between the top of the hip bone and the lowest rib. Ensure the tape is snug, but does not

compress the skin and is parallel to the floor. The measurement should be taken when the person being measured has breathed out.

Other factors

- You have been diagnosed with any problems with your circulation had a heart attack or stroke, or if you've got high blood pressure you may be at an increased risk of diabetes.
- Pregnant woman can develop temporary type of diabetes – gestational diabetes. Having this – or giving birth to a large baby – can increase the risk of woman going on to develop diabetes in the future.
- You're a woman with polycystic ovary syndrome and you are overweight – you're at an increased risk of developing diabetes.
- You've been told you have impaired glucose tolerance (IFG) or impaired fasting glycaemia (IFG) it means the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood is higher than normal but you don't have diabetes and you should follow a healthy diet, lose weight if you need to and keep active, to help yourself prevent diabetes. But make sure you are regularly tested

Other conditions such as raised triglycerides (a type of blood fat) and severe mental health problems can also increase your risk.

The more risk factors that apply to you, the greater your risk of having diabetes.

Take the 2 minute On-Line Diabetes Test

Take Diabetes UK's 2 minute On-Line Diabetes Test at the following Link:

<http://www.diabetes.org.uk/measure-up/>

"Silent Assassin "campaign

Last October Diabetes UK launched 'Silent Assassin', a hard-hitting UK-wide campaign highlighting that diabetes is a serious condition that causes heart disease, stroke, amputations, kidney failure and blindness. The advertising campaign included a series of outdoor posters as well as newspaper and consumer magazine advertising.

Diabetes Week

Diabetes Week is in June each year and is the annual focal point of Diabetes UK's awareness and campaigning activities to help make people realise that diabetes is a serious condition and to raise funds to help find a cure. [More information from Diabetes UK: <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/>]

World Diabetes Day

World Diabetes Day is on 14 November every year. [More information from Diabetes UK: <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/>]