



# USEFUL STUFF ABOUT DIABETES

For People with Diabetes & Carers

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**Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching  
Hospitals Specialist Diabetes Team**

is collaborating with partners from across Cheshire  
and Merseyside to offer **My Diabetes My Way**  
to help local people manage their diabetes:  
[cm.mydiabetes.com](http://cm.mydiabetes.com)

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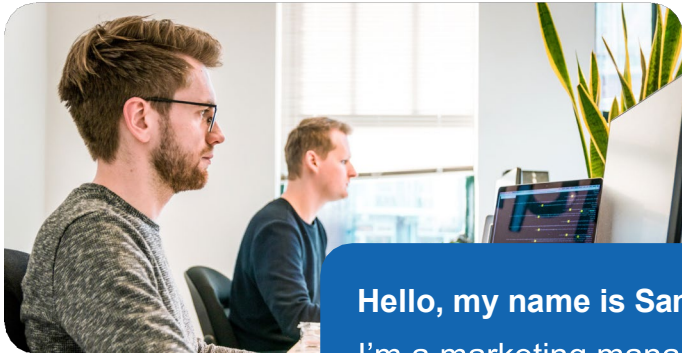
SPECIALIST DIABETES TEAM  
KJH: Version 2.0, July 2023. Review July 2026.



**Mersey and West  
Lancashire  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust



## SAM'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Sam,**

I'm a marketing manager for an online tech company. I'm very busy, I travel a lot and I haven't got time to read a hundred leaflets about my recently diagnosed Type 2 diabetes.

I want a website that I can dip in and out of and a small book that I can fly through on the train and then keep on a shelf at home in case I have a problem.

**Can you help me?**



**Diabetes Emergency Advice**  
**01744 646 200 (Option 5)**

## INTRODUCTION

- Understanding diabetes makes living with it easier.
  - There's good stuff about diabetes on the internet (but also nonsense – be careful).
  - This book assumes you want information, but you don't want to spend ages.
  - It's brief.  
One story and one page per topic.  
**It's simple – you get stuff – fast.**
  - If you want more – go online:  
**cm.mydiabetes.com**
- or ask a professional
- If you need emergency advice call:  
**Diabetes Emergency Advice**  
**01744 – 646-200 (Option 5)**

## JANINE'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Janine,**

Last week, I had the shock of my life. My 79-year old mother who has had diabetes for 6 months developed a really bad fever and her sugars went through the roof.

I didn't know what to do. I mean it didn't seem to justify dialling 999, but I knew I needed advice and I needed it quickly.



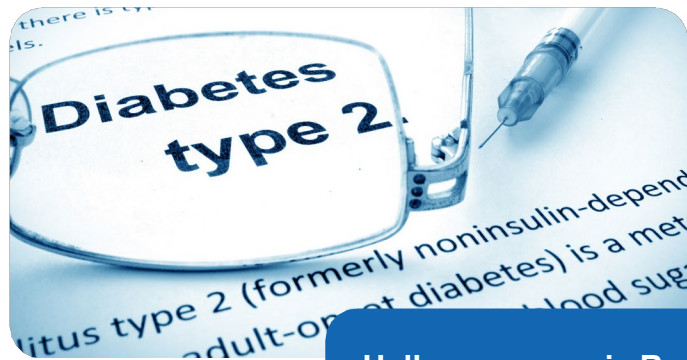
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## EMERGENCIES

- **If life-threatening, DIAL 999.**
- If routine – ask your GP or Practice Nurse.
- If you go to St Helens Hospital Diabetes Centre and it's non-urgent, call: 01744-646-200 (Option 2).
- High sugars and feel well, see Chapter 6.
- High sugars and feel ill, call GP or phone NHS 111.
- Low sugars and feel well, see Chapter 5.
- **Low sugars and drowsy or ill, DIAL 999.**

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## REG'S STORY



Hello, my name is Reg,

I was diagnosed with Diabetes Type 2, but I haven't got a clue what that means.

Someone said I'd need insulin, but I haven't had any so far – just a diet sheet. I have no idea whether what I'm doing is right or not, but I am getting up for a wee six times a night now.



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## WHAT IS DIABETES?

- Sugar is fuel, for muscle, heart, brain...etc.
- We eat sugar but our bodies make it too.
- The insulin our body makes puts sugar in the right place at the right time.
- **Lack of insulin or faulty insulin action causes blood sugar to rise = DIABETES.**
- High blood sugars cause thirst, dry mouth and make us wee a lot.
- Very high blood sugars make us ill.
- To stabilise blood sugar and prevent bad stuff, some people need just healthy eating, some need healthy eating plus tablets and some need healthy eating plus insulin.

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## ANN'S STORY



Hello, my name is Ann,

I've had diabetes for 14 years now, but it's fine. My partner and I eat a really healthy diet and I take a tablet with my breakfast and with my evening meal.

Of course, we have occasional treats, but the dietician said that was fine – occasionally.



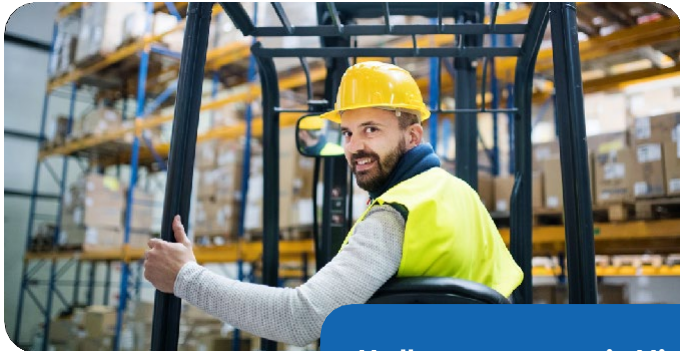
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## HEALTHY EATING

- Our bodies don't handle sugar well in Diabetes, so eat fewer high sugar foods e.g. cakes, fizzy drinks and sweets.
- In fact, everyone should reduce their intake of added sugar which typically leads to weight gain and ill-health.
- Most people do best with 3 meals per day: breakfast, lunch & dinner. Some need snacks e.g. fruit in between – that's ok.
- Aim for 1/3 of the plate as starchy carbs e.g. pasta, brown bread, new/sweet potatoes.
- And 1/3 of plate as vegetables – these can be fresh, frozen or tinned.
- Fruit is good, but not too much – one handful every 2-3 hours max.

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## NICK'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Nick,**

I work at B&Q driving a forklift truck and play football 4 times per week.

I do finger-prick blood tests (my fingers are sore), but I'm not really sure what the numbers mean or what I'm supposed to do with them!



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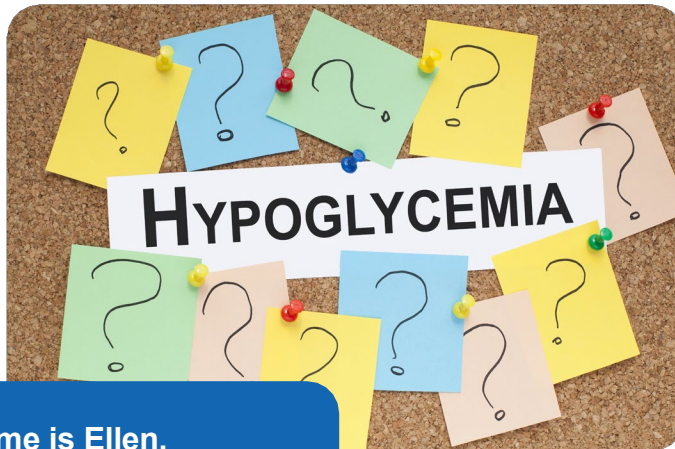
## BLOOD SUGAR TESTING

- Not everyone needs to test blood sugar. If you don't and you're unwell – call your GP or Practice Nurse or NHS 111.
- People have their own blood sugar targets, but for most, it's getting most readings:

<b>Pre-breakfast</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<b>Pre-lunch</b>	<b>4-7</b>
<b>Pre-tea</b>	<b>4-7</b>
<b>Pre-bed</b>	<b>6-10</b>
- If blood sugars stay mostly higher than this, see your GP/Practice nurse to discuss treatment change.
- Everyone experiences occasional periods of higher sugars. If you're well, just keep monitoring and expect them to settle.
- See also chapters 6 and 7.

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## ELLEN'S STORY

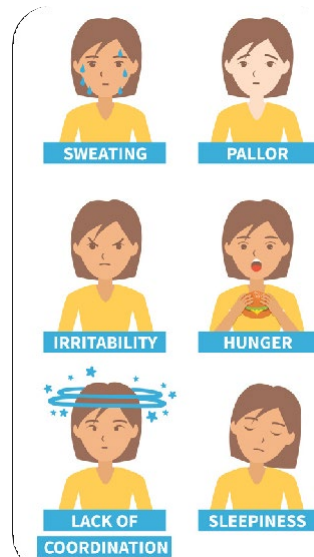


Hello, my name is Ellen,

I've just recently been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and I'm really scared about going 'hypo'.

I just need to know what hypo is and what I should do. They told me in the hospital, but I can't remember because they bombarded me with a million facts!

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## LOW SUGAR (HYPO)

- If blood sugar goes too low (less than 4.0) – it makes you ill. This is called HYPO.
- People often feel sweaty, shaky, anxious, hungry, irritable, tingling and look pale.
- As it gets worse, people get confused or drowsy, sometimes aggressive and may lose consciousness.
- **Person must get sugar fast. Emergency – if they're unconscious, DIAL 999.**
- **If able to eat, take 5 glucotabs, a cup (200ml) of sugary drink e.g. lucozade, or a handful of sweets or HYPOSTOP. Retest sugar in 15 mins.**
- On recovery, the person should have a sandwich or other food and should monitor sugars closely for the next 24 hr.

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## DANIELLE'S STORY



Hello, my name is Danielle,

Last week my sugar was 28 and I didn't know what to do.

Usually my sugars run between 10 and 20.

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## HIGH SUGARS

- High blood sugars can make you ill.
- Usually when sugars are too high people get very thirsty and dry-mouthed and wee a lot and may feel tired.
- Everyone experiences occasional periods of higher sugars. If you're well, just keep monitoring and expect them to settle.
- If your sugars are persistently high over weeks or months see your GP or Practice nurse to discuss treatment change.
- If your sugars are usually ok, but go up relatively suddenly, ask: am I unwell? If you're well – just monitor and only if they don't settle, see a GP or Practice Nurse.
- **If you're ill, check for ketones and get medical advice immediately.**

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## BILL'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Bill,**

My wife is the St Helens poisoner. Well, I thought she was last week after she gave me that dodgy cream cake (I knew eating cream cakes was a bad idea)!

I got terrible D&V – couldn't keep food down. And I wasn't sure whether or not I was supposed to take my insulin.



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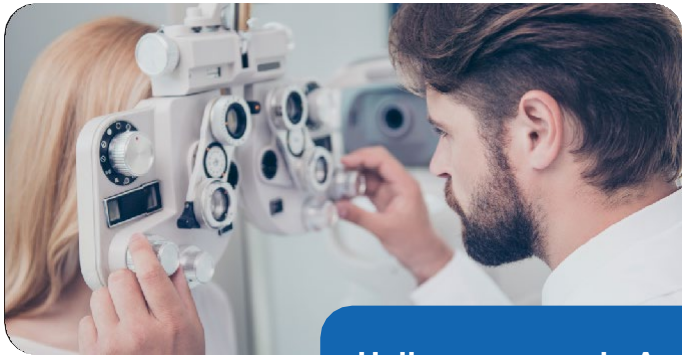
## SICK DAY RULES

- Everyone gets coughs, colds, diarrhoea and stuff every now and then.
- If you do, your blood sugars may go up.
- **DO NOT STOP taking insulin or Diabetes tablets. If in doubt, ASK.**
- Substitute carbs e.g. bowl of cereal, soup and bread, milky puddings... etc if you're unable to eat normally. If in doubt, ASK.
- If you're vomiting or have very severe diarrhoea, call your GP or NHS 111.
- If you test blood sugars, test more often and check ketones if sugar is more than 15.
- If ketones raised (1.5 or more) call your GP or NHS 111 or go to A&E.

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## AMY'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Amy,**

I've had diabetes since I was 3 and my control was shocking until I was in my late 20s.

Unfortunately, I didn't go for my eye checks (or anything else to be honest) and now my eyesight is really bad. At least I've got Rufus (my guide dog).

I want to make sure that no-one else makes the mistakes I made because blindness is preventable.



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## EYE CARE

- Changes in blood sugar may cause blurred vision. This is temporary and normal. There is no lasting damage.
- **If blood sugars run high over years, it can cause permanent eye damage and blindness.**
- Good blood sugar control helps prevent eye damage and blindness.
- If eye damage does occur, timely treatment, such as laser therapy helps prevent blindness.
- **Diabetic eye damage does NOT cause symptoms until it's too late.**
- **This is why a yearly DIABETES EYE CHECK is essential. Ask your GP if you've NOT had a check for over a year.**

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## HENRY'S STORY



Hello, my name is Henry,  
But my friends call me Bill.

I've had diabetes for 30 years and I have trouble with nerve damage in my feet. I had an ulcer on my toe 2 years ago, but that's healed now and everything is fine because I follow footcare advice and see a lovely chiropodist regularly.



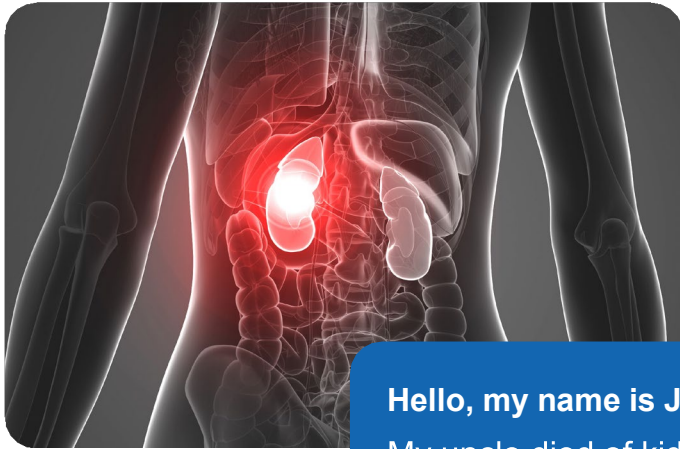
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## FOOT CARE

- High blood sugars over years can cause permanent nerve or blood vessel damage.
- Nerve or blood vessel damage can lead to foot ulcers and risk of amputation.
- Good blood sugar control helps prevent foot damage and amputation.
- Simple things such as not walking barefoot, daily foot checks and well-fitting shoes help prevent ulcers and amputation.
- **Always get your yearly FOOT CHECK.**
- If you get new foot numbness, speak to your GP or Practice Nurse.
- **If you get redness or ulcer or signs of infection in your feet, speak to your GP or Practice Nurse urgently.**

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## JILL'S STORY



Hello, my name is Jill,

My uncle died of kidney failure as a result of diabetes. It was horrible. I'm determined to make sure that I'm ok.

I get regular checks and I'm on blood pressure tablets and a kidney-protecting tablet and stuff to prevent heart disease.



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## KIDNEY CARE

- **High blood sugars over years can cause permanent kidney damage.**
- Kidney damage can lead to kidney failure and need for a kidney machine or transplant.
- Good blood sugar control helps prevent kidney damage and kidney failure.
- Simple things such as regular blood pressure checks and a yearly blood and urine test for your kidneys help prevent kidney damage and kidney failure.
- **Always get a yearly KIDNEY CHECK.**
- If you have kidney damage – it's treatable to help prevent kidney failure. **Get tested. Get sorted.**

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## DOUG'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Doug,**

I had a heart attack when I was 39 because I smoked and had blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes.

I'm fine now, but I've had a bypass and I've got a pacemaker.

I tell my son, make sure you get your blood pressure and cholesterol checks and most importantly, don't ever start smoking. Thankfully he listens. In fact, he's fit as a butcher's dog.

I wish someone had told me!



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## HEALTHY HEART

- **High blood sugars over years can cause permanent heart damage.**
- Heart damage can lead to heart failure or heart attack.
- Good blood sugar control helps prevent heart damage and heart failure.
- Simple things such as regular blood pressure (BP) checks, cholesterol checks and stopping smoking help prevent heart damage and heart failure.
- **Always get a yearly BP and Cholesterol CHECK.**
- If you have heart damage – it's treatable. **Get tested. Get sorted.**

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## GRACE'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Grace,**

I look after my Aunty Beth. She's got dementia. She's also got diabetes, blood pressure, and smokes and she's had 3 strokes.

I thought that there was nothing you could do to prevent dementia, but the doctors have told my aunty that eating healthily, maintaining a normal weight and regular exercise, not only reduces the risk of diabetes, but also helps prevent dementia.



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## HEALTHY BRAIN

- **High blood sugar over years can lead to stroke and dementia.**
- Good blood sugar control over years helps prevent stroke and dementia.
- Simple things such as regular blood pressure (BP) checks, cholesterol checks and stopping smoking help prevent stroke and dementia.
- **Always get a yearly BP and Cholesterol CHECK and stop smoking.**
- Regular exercise helps prevent stroke and dementia (and heart disease, heart failure and many other conditions).

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## ELSIE'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Elsie,**

I've got lung cancer and COPD and I have to have oxygen for at least 14 hours every day.

Unfortunately, I probably won't be here for the birth of my first granddaughter later this year.

I wish I'd never started smoking, but we didn't know when I was a girl. There's no excuse now – please don't make the same mistake I did!

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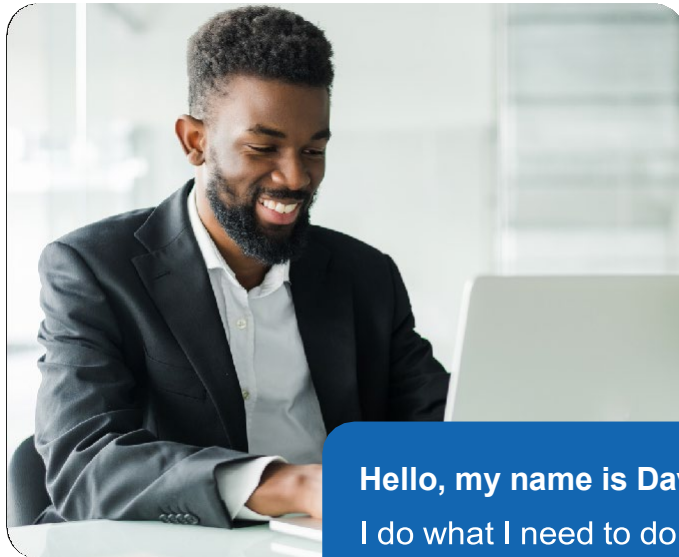
## SMOKING

- Smoking increases the risk of:  
**Cancer – pretty much all types**  
**Heart Attack and Heart Failure**  
**Stroke**  
**Dementia**  
**Gangrene and Amputation**
- It's never too late to stop smoking
- If you want to try to stop smoking see your GP or Practice Nurse to get help with nicotine substitutes and a smoking cessation programme.
- **People who keep trying to give up are more likely to succeed – FACT.**

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## DAVID'S STORY



**Hello, my name is David,**

I do what I need to do to manage my diabetes and don't let it dominate my life.

I've just had my annual checks at my GP surgery and the practice nurse tells me that everything is fine. So now I can get on with living life, eh.



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## ANNUAL CHECKS

- Yearly (annual) diabetes checks help people stay healthy.
- What is checked?
  - Height, weight & body mass index**
  - Average blood sugar test (A1c)**
  - Blood Pressure (BP)**
  - Kidney blood test (eGFR)**
  - Kidney urine test (ACR)**
  - Cholesterol blood test**
  - Community diabetic eye check**
  - Community diabetic foot check**
- Why are these checked?

Because picking stuff up early leads to treatment that prevents damage e.g. blindness or amputation or kidney failure.

**Get it checked. Get it sorted.**

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## NORMA'S STORY

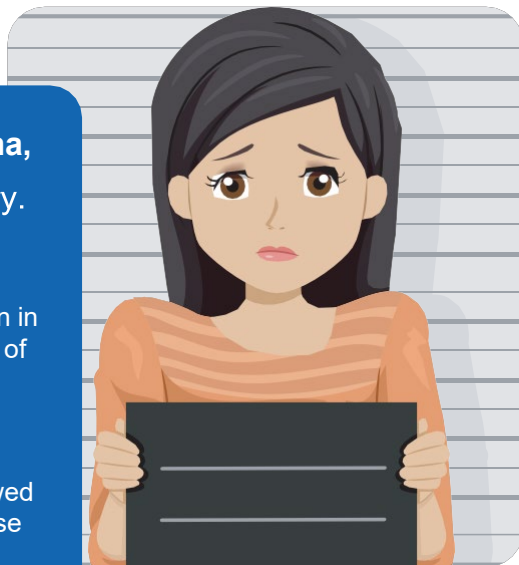
Hello, my name is Norma,

I want to tell you my story.  
I'm a criminal!

I was driving my car last May and unfortunately a young man in a sports car pulled out in front of me and I hit him.

When the police came, I told them I had diabetes and they asked me whether I had followed DVLA guidance. Well, of course I said I had, but then they checked my blood meter and it was obvious that I hadn't done any checks.

I was prosecuted and lost my licence and sports car guy got off.



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## DRIVING

- All drivers with diabetes must follow all DVLA guidance, including that specifically about diabetes.
- **This page is too short to cover all DVLA guidance. You must check the DVLA website (<https://www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving>) regularly or get the DVLA information before driving.**
- **All drivers with Diabetes must tell their motor insurance about their diabetes.**
- There are strict rules on blood sugar testing for many drivers with diabetes – find out what applies to you and follow it.
- There are even stricter special rules for those with PCV and LGV licences drivers - find out if these apply to you and follow them.

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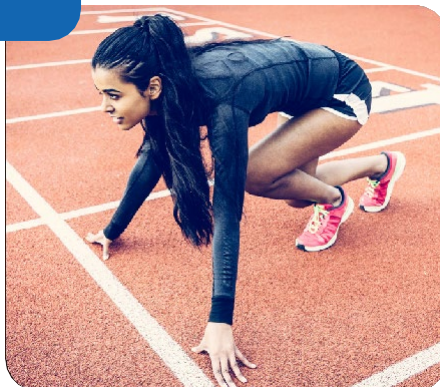
## BETH'S STORY



Hello, my name is Beth,

I have had Type 1 diabetes since I was a ten. I'm a triathlete and I use an insulin pump to manage my diabetes.

Once you know what to do, it's pretty straightforward. There are loads of professional sports people that have diabetes.



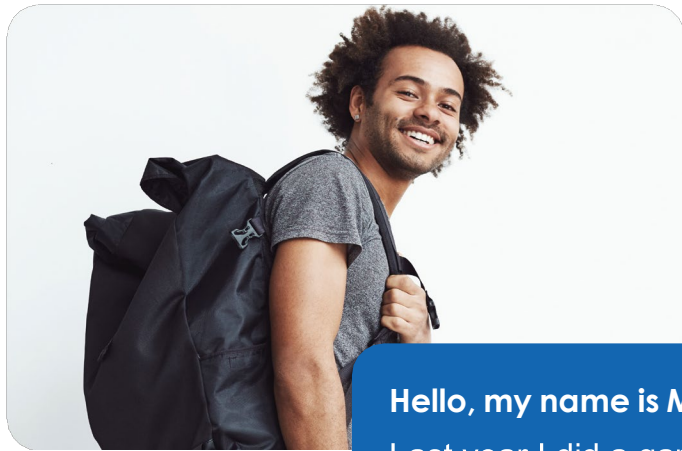
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## EXERCISE & SPORT

- **Regular exercise helps prevent:**
  - Cancer**
  - Heart attack and Heart failure**
  - Stroke**
  - Dementia**
  - Depression and Anxiety**
  - Weight gain**
- What is regular exercise?
  - Ideally 3-5 x per week, less OK
  - Ideally 20-30 mins, less OK
  - Ideally sweaty and breathless
  - Aerobic and gym stuff both good
  - Any is better than none
- **Sugars can go low after exercise so check more often till the next day.**
- Some people need extra carbs before, during or after exercise - find out what works for you. **If in doubt, ASK.**

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## MARK'S STORY



Hello, my name is Mark,

Last year I did a gap year before Uni and I needed to learn loads about how to manage my diabetes whilst I travelled.

It was a bit of a pain at first, but I've learned so much about me and my diabetes. Nothing fazes me now.



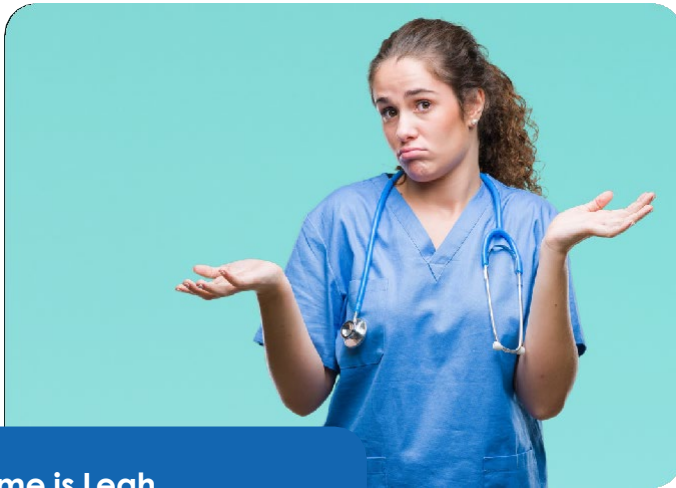
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## TRAVEL

- Things to consider:
  - Take enough insulin with you**
  - Take monitoring and sharps stuff**
  - Take a letter about needles and pens**
  - Carry carbs just in case**
  - Carry it all on your person**
  - Carry ID and an alert card**
  - Travel insurance and EHIC card**
  - Find out how to get help as soon as you arrive at your destination.**
- Blood sugars during travel
  - Sometimes they go up (Ch.7)
  - Sometimes they go down (Ch.6)
  - Monitor more often (Ch.5)
- **If unwell... Follow Sick Day Rules (Ch.8)**
- **If in doubt... Get help early.**

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## LEAH'S STORY



Hello, my name is Leah,

When I asked my practice nurse about contraception with my diabetes, she was really unsure.

Turns out, it's pretty much exactly the same as for anyone else!



## CONTRACEPTION

- In the main, all common forms of contraception are as suitable for women with diabetes as for women without diabetes.
- Pregnancy is safe for most women with diabetes, but good blood sugar control and being on high dose (5mg) FOLIC acid at CONCEPTION are critical.
- Some treatments are unsuitable during pregnancy – always check with your GP.
- Discuss with your GP or Practice Nurse, if you are planning pregnancy and use contraception until everything is sorted.
- If in doubt, discuss with your GP or Practice Nurse.

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## JOY'S STORY



Hello, my name is Joy,

I've just given birth to our lovely baby daughter. It was a pain having to discuss blood sugar control with the team before conceiving and having more or less weekly checks throughout pregnancy, but I'm so glad we did.

Now Maisy has the very best start in life!



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## PREGNANCY

- Pregnancy is safe for most women with diabetes, but good blood sugar control, being on high dose (5mg) FOLIC acid at CONCEPTION and avoiding certain medicines are critical.
- Discuss with your GP or Practice Nurse, if you are planning pregnancy and use contraception until everything is sorted.
- As soon as you become pregnant, you should be referred to Hospital Specialists (Obstetrics and Diabetes). This is usually a so-called Joint Antenatal Clinic. **Early referral is vital.**
- Management of diabetes in pregnancy is too complicated for this short book. You will receive specific advice and support from those caring for you during your pregnancy.

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## RICHARD'S STORY



Hello, my name is Richard,

I'm Richard and my 6-year old son has Type 1 diabetes. He's fine so far.

I'm determined to get involved in diabetes locally (and nationally if I can) for my son and for every other young person with diabetes. Diabetes UK is a great way for me to give something back and shape the future for people with diabetes.

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**DIABETES UK**  
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

## DIABETES UK

- Diabetes UK supports those with diabetes
- Diabetes UK has advice lines and a vast amount of helpful information:  
Tel: 0345 123 2399  
Website: [diabetes.org.uk](https://diabetes.org.uk)  
Email: [helpline@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:helpline@diabetes.org.uk)  
 /diabetesuk  
 @DiabetesUK
- There is a local branch of Diabetes UK in St Helens:  
Tel: 0151 480 0821  
Website: <https://st-helens-and-district.diabetesukgroup.org/>

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## GINA'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Gina,**

I've recently being diagnosed with diabetes following a rather traumatic divorce. I'm convinced the stress brought it on!

I was really reluctant at first, but I found talking to a counsellor has really helped me come to terms with my diabetes and my anxiety and I so prefer talking to a professional to taking tablets.



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## WELLBEING

- Diabetes and related long-term conditions may also impact our mental health and wellbeing.
- **Good mental health and wellbeing is equally as important as physical health.**
- Below are contact numbers for services offering support with wellbeing ('Think wellbeing'):

<b>St Helens</b>	<b>01744 647100</b>
<b>Wigan</b>	<b>01942 264051</b>
<b>Knowsley</b>	<b>0151 2904999</b>
<b>Bolton IAPT</b>	<b>01204 483 100</b>
<b>Warrington</b>	<b>01925 248460</b>
<b>Talk Liverpool</b>	<b>0151 228 2300</b>

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## STEVE'S STORY



**Hello, my name is Steve,**  
Half my family have diabetes (well more than half actually). I know my local contact details but my brother and sister didn't so I wanted to have local diabetes services listed on a single page.

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## CONTACT NUMBERS

- 1. Aintree Hospitals**  
(Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust)  
**Diabetes Centre: 0151 529 4876**
- 2. Royal Liverpool**  
(Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust)  
**Diabetes Nurses: 0151 706 2829**
- 3. Warrington Hospital**  
Foundation Trust  
**Diabetes Centre: 01925 662 179**
- 4. St Helens Hospital**  
(St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust)  
**Diabetes Nurses: 01744 646 200 (Option 2)**

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## NOW WHAT?



OK, so you have read the book.

Test yourself!

- Do you know what to do for Hypo?
- Do you know what to do if you're unwell?
- How do you manage sudden high sugars?
- Do you know 'Sick Day Rules'?
- Are you confident about Travel and Diabetes?



## ACTIONS RIGHT NOW

1. Put the emergency advice line number in your phone under '**Diabetes Emergency Advice Line**'.
2. **Keep the book somewhere you'll remember:**
  - It's got some useful stuff.
  - It's got the website with more detailed useful stuff.
  - **If in doubt, ASK!**

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