

# Paediatric Diabetes

## Complications of Diabetes

### What are the complications of diabetes?

The complications that can occur are caused by regularly raised blood glucose levels damaging the nerves and the body's blood vessels. You may think that this happens to older people and will not affect you, but complications can affect younger people too. Complications are more likely the longer you have diabetes and also if you have blood glucose levels and an HbA1c that is too high for long periods of time.

### What can you do to help delay complications?

- **Work out a plan** - With your diabetes team to reduce your HbA1c result – even a drop of 10mmol/mol will reduce the risks. Your overall aim should be to **achieve an HbA1c of 58mmol/mol or under**. If you are approaching 18 years of age the adult team will like you to have a target of 53mmol/mol or below.
- **Make sure you have your Annual Review** - This will look for early signs of complications. If picked up early, problems can often be treated before they become a serious concern. Please see the section regarding Annual Reviews for more information. This is a good time to set your own goals to improve your diabetes care.
- **Look after your feet** - Check out the leaflet that tells you about this in more detail.
- **Do not smoke** - This makes the hardening and furring of the blood vessels in your body much worse. If you need help to stop, talk to your diabetes team who can sign post you to specialist advisors.
- **Get plenty of exercise** - Find something you enjoy and get active.
- **Eat a healthy diet** - Avoid putting on too much weight. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and not too much fat - talk to your dietician if you have concerns.

## **What are the complications of diabetes?**

### **Heart Disease**

People with diabetes are more at risk of heart disease because the raised blood glucose over time increases the risk of furring and hardening of the blood vessels which occurs as we all get older.

### **Stroke**

People with diabetes are also more likely to have a stroke because of the effects of raised blood glucose on the blood vessels that go to the brain.

### **Diabetic Foot Problems**

Foot damage by ulceration happens because regularly high blood glucose cause nerve and blood vessel damage. This means an injury to the foot may not be felt before it becomes a serious infection. Due to the poor blood vessel supply it may not heal properly and could develop an ulcer.

### **Eye Disease**

Diabetic retinopathy is caused by damage to the small blood vessels at the back to the eye. Early detection and treatment can help prevent sight problems and blindness, but a number of people with diabetes will still go blind each year.

### **Kidney Disease**

This is caused by damage to the small blood vessels in the kidney from regularly high blood sugars and also from high blood pressure, which can occur as you get older. Early detection and treatment can prevent more serious problems

### **Impotence**

This is when a man is unable to get an erect penis because of damage to nerves and blood vessels. This can result from having diabetes for many years. There is help available so do talk to your diabetes team should you need any advice.