



Diabetes UK – What is Diabetes?

There are two main types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2. They are different conditions but they're both serious.

There are some other rarer types of diabetes too.

What all types of diabetes have in common is that they cause people to have too much glucose in their blood, but we all need some glucose. It's what gives us our energy.

We get glucose when our bodies break down the carbohydrates that we eat or drink and that glucose is released into our blood.

We also need a hormone called insulin. It's made by our pancreas and it's insulin that allows the glucose in our blood to enter our cells and fuel our bodies.

If you don't have diabetes, your pancreas senses when glucose has entered your bloodstream and releases the right amount of insulin so the glucose can get into your cells.

But if you have diabetes, this system doesn't work.

When you've got type 1 diabetes you can't make any insulin at all. If you got type 2 diabetes it's a bit different.

The insulin you make either can't work effectively or you can't produce enough of it.

In both types of diabetes because glucose can't get into your cells, it begins to build up in your blood and too much glucose in your blood causes a lot of different problems.

To begin with, it leads to diabetes symptoms like having to wear lots, being incredibly thirsty and feeling very tired.

You may also lose weight, get infections like thrush, or suffer from slow healing wounds.

Over a long period of time high glucose levels in your blood can seriously damage your heart, your eyes, your feet and your kidneys.

These are known as the complications of diabetes.

But with the right treatment and care, people can live a healthy life and there's much less risk that someone will experience these complications.



If you've got diabetes you can find lots of information and support about living with it using our website and helpline.

As well as campaigning for everyone with diabetes to get the right care, Diabetes UK fund research into all types of diabetes so we can develop new treatments and one day find a cure.

You can find out more about type 1 and type 2 diabetes and how they're treated in our next videos.

