



What is Type 2 Diabetes?

Dr Joan St John – GP with a special interest in diabetes

Type two diabetes is when the level of glucose sometimes called sugar in the blood is raised. It's higher than the normal level and this is what we call type two diabetes. It's a condition that can affect many different organs because it affects the blood vessels and circulation.

One of the major risk factors for type two diabetes is weight. And as the weight increases, the risk of type two diabetes increases. Another major risk factor for type two diabetes is ethnicity. So black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities are at increased risk of developing type two diabetes. For South Asian communities, this can be six times the increased risk. For black, African, and Caribbean communities, this can be two to four times the increased risk.

Nina Patel – Diabetes Nurse Consultant

In order to explain to somebody who's suddenly found out that they've got diabetes. First of all, you need to kind of reassure the person that they're not going to be sick or anything because they've heard all sorts of things and diabetes diagnosis has really evolved. Ten years ago you'd see somebody who was thirsty and tired, had lost weight, was dehydrated, no energy, perhaps had a bit of infections everywhere and so on. But nowadays, because it's so much easier to diagnose with just a routine blood test, often you'll find you're feeling, well, you've done a routine blood test and then you get a phone call saying, oops, your blood test shows you have diabetes.

Dr Joan St John – GP with a special interest in diabetes

The treatment options for type two diabetes are first and foremost diet and exercise or the type of food that you're eating and the activity and the movement that you do. In other words, so, lifestyle is what we tend to call it. That's the fundamental way to treat type two diabetes. And so normally we would advise some advice about the type of foods that you're eating, whether this is carbohydrate type foods or other type of foods, which might have an effect on your blood glucose levels, but also your activity level. So we don't mean necessarily going to the gym. It can be dancing, it can be any form of movement. Anything like that will be helpful to type two diabetes. Now sometimes that's not sufficient and you may need additional treatment. So the first types of additional treatment that you would have would be things like tablets, but that's in addition to your lifestyle changes. And if the tablets aren't sufficient, then sometimes you need injectable treatments. So the injectable treatments can be insulin, but there are non-insulin injectable treatments as well. So those are the variety of options that you can have. But first and foremost, underpinning it all, is always lifestyle.

