

DIABETES SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

December 2021

In this issue:

Support service updates	Top tips to keep your feet healthy
Staying active over winter	Diabetes and illness
Covid-19 vaccine update	Alcohol and diabetes
Getting the flu jab	Holidays and diabetes

Welcome to your December issue of the Diabetes Support Newsletter.

In this issue we've included articles on vaccines, illness, feet and food to help you stay safe and healthy over winter.

Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Support service updates

DESMOND

Diabetes Education and Self-Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed

DESMOND face-to-face groups have now returned and can be accessed as an alternative to virtual groups! Courses are currently being delivered at the following venues:

South Nottinghamshire:

- St Luke's Church (West Bridgford)
- Stapleford Methodist Church (Stapleford)
- Dora Phillips Hall (Eastwood)

Mid Nottinghamshire

- St Peter's Centre (Mansfield)
- Ashfield Play Forum (Ashfield)
- Bridge Community Centre (Newark)

As a result of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions in healthcare settings, measures have been put in place for groups:

- Social distancing will apply throughout the sessions at a 2-metre distance.
- Surgical masks or visors must be worn by all participants and staff with **no exemptions**.

For more information or to process a self-referral please contact:

Telephone: 01623 484837

Email: desmondreferrals@nottshc.nhs.uk

Keep in touch with the DESMOND team via social media:

 Twitter – [@DESMONDNotts](https://twitter.com/DESMONDNotts)

 Facebook – [@desmondnotts](https://www.facebook.com/desmondnotts)

For Nottingham City residents, please contact:

Telephone: 03001310300 option 5

Email: NCP.IntegratedDiabetesService@nhs.net

DAFNE

Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating

- Group education programme for individuals over 17 with type 1 diabetes on multiple daily injections, which aims to improve understanding and promote self-management of the condition.
- Free to access across Nottinghamshire County and City.
- Face-to-face courses are delivered by 2 trained educators over a 5-day period (Monday-Friday) or 1 day a week over 5 weeks.
- Remote courses are delivered by 1 trained educator over a 6-week period with a blended learning approach of self-directed learning via an online course and weekly virtual group meetings.
- Referral can be discussed with an individual's diabetes team at the hospital or GP surgery.

DIABETES SUPPORT GROUPS

The aim of a support group is to bring people together in the local area to share experiences of living with diabetes and to get practical tips from others about how to live well with the condition.

If you are interested in attending a local support group, please discuss with your GP practice or Diabetes Nurse.

FAMILY LINE

The holidays can be a stressful time for families. Managing family tensions, worrying about finances and dealing with increased pressures on mental health can all play a part. FamilyLine is a free to access service available across England.

FamilyLine provides free information, guidance and support on any family related issue. People can get in touch with a particular question, simple or complex issue or even just for a chat. Find out more, or get in touch by using the details below.

Phone: 0808 802 6666 / Text: 07537 404 282

Email: familyline@family-action.org.uk

Hours: Mon-Fri, 9am to 9pm

More info: <https://bit.ly/3cCZDrD>

Staying active over winter

Staying or becoming active over winter months can become more challenging for some individuals due to the dark nights and colder weather. There can also be numerous other barriers individuals with diabetes may face to being active.

However, it's important to recognise the ways in which activity can benefit diabetes management and each step you take to moving more can help with managing your condition.

Moving more can:

- Reduce blood pressure and manage cholesterol levels
- Improve blood glucose levels day to day
- Improve energy levels and quality of sleep
- Reduce the risk of many common cancers
- Promote weight loss or support the management of a healthy weight
- Keep the heart and blood vessels healthy
- Keep joints healthy and improve flexibility
- Improve low mood and reduce stress levels – activity releases endorphins, our happy hormones!



Like with all diabetes management there isn't a one size fits all – there isn't one type of activity that's best for everyone with diabetes! It's important to find what works best for you as an individual – this can depend on various things like what you enjoy, where you are and what time you have available. Staying connected with others can also help with your physical and mental health so consider ways to get moving with family and friends!

Making a small change to your daily routine can considerably boost activity levels. This could include taking the stairs instead of the lift or elevator, getting off the bus/tram one stop earlier, or parking further away from your destination. You could also consider walking where possible instead of using the car or public transport.

You could also try taking up a new physical activity as a hobby – this could help you manage your diabetes and improve your mental wellbeing.

Here are some ideas for activities to do at home during the winter months:



Housework /
cleaning



Chair-based
exercises



Increased time
spent standing



On the spot
walking during
TV ad breaks



Climbing up and
down stairs



Workout videos
e.g. NHS fitness
studio

Further support:

Order or download your free [Diabetes UK guide to moving more](#) – packed full of information and advice about getting active when you have diabetes.

Contact the Diabetes UK helpline for personalised and tailored advice from their highly trained specialists about getting active. Email helpline@diabetes.org.uk or call 0345 123 2399 to arrange a conversation with their Physical Activity Helpline Advisors.

Visit the NHS website for information on physical activity as well as ideas to help you get active. Their [Fitness Studio](#) is a great resource for those looking for free online workouts to follow.

Consider accessing [Your Health Your Way](#), a service available for County residents that can provide further support around getting active. A range of services are available including group classes, guided walks, family sessions and exercise buddies. Information for your area can be found on their website.



Covid-19 vaccine update

It is vital to ensure we are protected against Covid-19 ahead of winter as the virus has not gone away and our hospitals are still seeing people who are admitted with Covid-19.

Anyone over the age of 40 and individuals over 16 with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from Covid-19 are being strongly encouraged to book their booster jabs.

For everyone who is eligible, Covid-19 booster appointments can be booked from 6 months (182 days) after the date of the second dose. Frontline health and social care workers can also use the booking system outlined below.

Appointments can be booked on the [NHS website](#) or by calling the booking line on 119.

Diabetes and illness

When you have a diabetes diagnosis, it's important to know how to cope when you're unwell. Being ill can affect your diabetes management, so you need to know what to do to keep your blood glucose levels as close to target as possible.

Illness and infections, as well as other forms of stress, can raise your blood glucose levels. The body releases more glucose into the blood stream as part of the body's mechanism for fighting illness and infection. This process can happen even if you're not eating or eating less than normal. For individuals without diabetes the body would simply produce more insulin to cope but when you've got diabetes, your body can't do this. The typical symptoms of diabetes can add to those of the original illness or infection and make it much worse.

However, feeling or being sick or having diarrhoea can make your blood sugar levels drop, because you're not absorbing food as usual.

If you have any concerns while your unwell contact your diabetes team immediately.

For more information please take a read of the following resources from TREND:

[Type 2 diabetes: What to do when you are ill](#)

[Type 1 diabetes: What to do when you are ill](#)

Tips to keep your feet healthy

Here are some top tips from one of our local NHS podiatrists on how to keep your feet healthy with diabetes:



Check your feet every day

Get to know what is 'normal' for you. Look for any new blisters, cuts, cracks or breaks in the skin, colour changes, heat, swelling or discharge.



Always wear socks or hosiery, don't walk in bare feet

Change them every day. Avoid any bulky seams and tight elastic.



Moisturise your feet every day

Apply moisturiser daily, but NOT between the toes.



Wash and dry your feet every day

Use mild soap and lukewarm (not hot) water. Dry your feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.



Take care cutting your toenails

Don't cut them down the sides or too short.

Tips for managing your diabetes when you're sick:

If taking insulin, then never stop/omit insulin – an increase in your usual insulin dose may be required during periods of illness. Be sure to talk your diabetes team as soon as you're feeling unwell so they can give you personalised advice.

Test your blood glucose levels more often – if you check your levels at home you will probably need to test more frequently, at least every four hours, including during the night. If you don't test your blood sugar levels then try to be aware of the signs of hyperglycaemia e.g. thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision etc.

Stay hydrated – have plenty of unsweetened drinks and aim to eat little and often.

Stop taking SGLT2I tablets – if you take a certain type of diabetes tablet called SGLT2I and become unwell, you should stop taking these. You should check your blood glucose levels more frequently (if you have been told to do so and have the kit available) and speak to your diabetes team. Taking these tablets when you're unwell could increase your risk of dehydration and developing diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) so it's important to know the symptoms to look out for. Your GP surgery would be able to advise on ketone testing if necessary.

Keep eating or drinking – if you can't keep food down, try snacks or drinks with carbohydrates in to provide you with energy. Try to sip sugary drinks or suck on glucose tablets or sweets like jelly beans. If you're vomiting, or not able to keep fluids down, get medical help as soon as possible.



Alcohol and diabetes

Most of us know that we should keep an eye on the amount of alcohol we drink. Regularly drinking a lot of alcohol (more than 14 units per week) can increase the risk of developing health problems such as some cancers, stroke, heart and liver disease, as well as impacting our mental health.

The good news is that diabetes doesn't mean alcohol is completely off limits. However, as with the general population, there are some recommendations to bear in mind when it comes to our favourite tittle.

Drink no more than **14 units per week**. This is the same for both men and women.

Spread your alcohol intake out over 3 or more days, especially if you regularly drink 14 units per week.

Try to have several **alcohol-free days** per week, especially if you are trying to cut down.

But what does this mean in practical terms? 14 units is equivalent to about 6 pints of standard strength beer, or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine. Here we've outlined the units in some common drinks:



Spirits
25ml, ABV 40%

1



Wine
125ml, ABV 12%

1.5



Lager/beer/
cider can
440ml, ABV 5.5%

2



Lager/beer/
cider 1/2 pint
284ml, ABV 3.8%

1



Alcopops
275ml, ABV 5.5%

1.5



Lager/beer/
cider bottle
330ml, ABV 5%

1.7



Wine
250ml, ABV 12%

3

For more information about alcohol reduction, [Your Health Your Way](#) is available via self-referral across Nottinghamshire.

"We can support with simple, realistic messages to help reduce your alcohol intake. We deliver a range of 1-1 and group sessions that support people to reduce their alcohol intake and drink within the recommended guidelines. The supportive, non-judgemental sessions aim to raise awareness of the adverse health consequences associated with alcohol consumption."

Holidays and diabetes

For those that celebrate Christmas and festive holidays it is typically a time to enjoy yourself and potentially have foods you wouldn't eat regularly throughout the rest of the year. Often these foods tend to be higher in saturated fat, free sugars, and salt than the foods consumed on more of a day-to-day basis.

If you have diabetes, you may find it more difficult to manage your diabetes throughout this time. However, it's still possible to enjoy yourself throughout the festive period without compromising your diet, blood glucose control, and overall diabetes self-management.

It's important to remember a break from the norm is to be expected. Don't beat yourself up if you do eat more than you usually would or choose foods that aren't perhaps as good for you. Enjoy it and then aim to get promptly back on track.

Throughout DESMOND, a group education course for individuals with type 2 diabetes, the acronym FAT is used as a tool for managing food and diabetes.

F

Frequency - how often am I having this?

A

Amount - how much am I having of this?

T

Type - is there an alternative type to choose?

These tips may support you with managing the festive period and eating out:

- Keep an eye on your portion sizes.
- If you have a smaller appetite, consider ordering a starter as your main meal.
- Fill up on the array of vegetables available but watch out for added festive extras like honey.
- Only order dessert after you've eaten your main meal, as you may end up feeling too full for one or less tempted.
- If you're having dessert, try to stick to one portion and consider what it's served with e.g. natural yoghurt vs double cream.
- There are no foods 'off limits' but try to be mindful about what food you're eating.
- Eat slowly – research shows it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register you are full.

Getting the flu jab

Why should I get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine for people living with diabetes. It is important to have the flu vaccine as getting flu can make diabetes harder to manage, which can increase the risk of hospital admissions. Getting the flu vaccine each year can help to prevent this.

Who will be offered the vaccine?

The flu vaccine is offered free on the NHS to all adults who are at risk of serious illness from flu, including people living with diabetes. It is recommended to try and get the flu jab in early Autumn if possible, although it can be booked throughout Autumn and Winter.

Flu jabs can be booked through your GP, if they have not already contacted you about it, or through most local pharmacies. There has been a higher demand for flu vaccines this year, so bear in mind you may have to wait longer than usual for the next available appointment, but don't worry, there will be enough for everyone.



What about COVID-19?

Getting both flu and COVID-19 at the same time has been shown to increase your risk of becoming seriously ill, so it is important to protect yourself by getting vaccinated. If you have already had COVID-19 it is still safe to get the flu vaccine, although you will need to make sure you have recovered from COVID-19 first.

Some people may be offered the COVID-19 booster vaccine. If so, it is still safe to have your flu jab, and both can be had at the same time if offered.

