



Therapy Guide
Diabetes

GKA.



The GKA Difference

Diabetes is a growing global healthcare problem, making it a key focus area in healthcare market research. Here at GKA, diabetes is one of our common topics and we have successfully completed a number of healthcare market research studies and fieldwork projects in the therapy area in recent years. We have a wealth of experience in recruiting patients, specialists, payers and KOLs and our expert panel includes diabetologists as well as specialist diabetes nurses and diabetes nurse educators. Not only that, but we also have access to a panel of diabetes patients as well as a constant connection with new patients via the GKA finders network which includes nurses, GPs, specialists, pharmacists, support groups and charities who help us to find suitable participants for healthcare market research studies.



The Lowdown

There are two main types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2, both of which can cause serious health issues requiring expert advice and a tailored approach to treatment. Type 1 diabetes affects just 10% of cases and occurs when the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin, whereas the more common type, type 2, occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the body's cells don't react to it.

Whereas type 1 diabetes can develop very quickly over weeks or even days, many people can have type 2 diabetes for years without realising because the early symptoms can be quite general, in fact, it is estimated that around 850,00 people in the UK are living with the condition and don't know it.

Some facts and figures about Diabetes



2.9 million people

An estimated 2.9 million people in the UK are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes



40+

Type 2 diabetes runs in families and usually develops after the age of 40



Weight

It is also more common in people who are overweight



400,000 with Type 1

Type 1 diabetes affects 400,000 in the UK and more than 29,000 are children



4% Increase

The incidence of type 1 diabetes is increasing by 4% each year



Children

Incidence rates of are increasing in children under the age of five



Understanding Diabetes

Causes

The amount of sugar present in the blood is controlled by a hormone called insulin that is produced by the pancreas. When food is digested, it enters into the bloodstream and insulin moves glucose from the blood into the cells, where it is then broken down to produce energy.



People that suffer from diabetes are unable to break down glucose into energy, either because there's not enough insulin present to move the glucose or because the insulin that is produced doesn't work properly. Although there are no lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes is often linked to being overweight and also tends to run in families.

Symptoms

The symptoms of diabetes occur because some or all of the glucose ingested stays in the blood and isn't used as fuel for energy. The main symptoms are common to both types of diabetes and include urinating more often than usual – particularly at night, feeling very thirsty, feeling very tired, unexplained weight loss and blurred vision. Additional symptoms also include slow healing cuts or wounds, frequent episodes of thrush and itching around the penis or vagina.



Vomiting or heavy, deep breathing is also a symptom of late stage type 1 diabetes and requires immediate admission to hospital. Patients should also seek urgent medical attention if they experience a loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting, a high temperature, stomach pain or 'fruity' smelling breath which may smell like pear drops or nail varnish.



Diagnosis

With both types of diabetes, it's important that patients are diagnosed as soon as possible and begin treatment straight away. Firstly, a urine sample will be tested for glucose. If glucose is detected, the patient will then have a specialist blood test known as glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) to determine whether or not they have diabetes. An HbA1c of 48mmol/mol (6.5%) is recommended as the cutoff point for diagnosis .



Although previously used to diagnose type 1 diabetes, the HbA1c test is increasingly used to test for type 2 diabetes and also as a screening test for people at high risk of diabetes, as well as a way to monitor how well diabetes is being controlled in existing sufferers. Unlike other tests such as the glucose tolerance test (GTT), the HbA1c test can be carried out at any time of day and doesn't require any special preparation such as fasting.

Treating Diabetes

As well as making lifestyle changes such as healthy eating, losing weight, exercising regularly and taking regular blood tests to monitor blood glucose levels stay well balanced, type 1 and 2 diabetes sufferers will often need additional treatments in the form of medicines such as insulin to control their diabetes, blood pressure, and blood fats.

Insulin is taken either by injection, insulin pen or via a pump to control blood sugar levels. The insulin only needs to be injected under the skin rather than into a muscle or vein, and once injected – usually into the thighs, buttocks or abdomen – it soaks into small blood vessels and is absorbed into the blood stream. The type of insulin used will depend on the patient.

Because type 1 diabetes results from the destruction of insulin-producing cells in the islets of the pancreas, islet cell transplants are another revolutionary – and sometimes life-saving – form of treatment for type 1 patients who suffer from severe hypos. The transplant involves extracting islet cells from the donor pancreas and implanting them into the liver of the patient.

There are also surgical options available for type 2 diabetes sufferers, including obesity surgery such as removal of part of the stomach or a gastric bypass, which can help patients lose weight and in turn better manage their diabetes. However, recent medical research has also shown that obesity surgery can also affect how the body uses insulin overall, making cells more sensitive to it and improving the way they use it.



Related conditions and other complications

People living with diabetes may have to deal with short and long-term complications as a result of their condition as well as a number of conditions associated with it. These conditions include coeliac disease, thyroid disease, polycystic ovary syndrome, muscular conditions, diabetes insipidus, mastopathy and dental health conditions.

Additional short-term complications include hypoglycaemia, diabetic ketoacidosis, and hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state, whereas long-term complications can include problems with the eyes, heart, kidneys, nerves, and feet. With all complication, keeping blood glucose blood pressure and blood fat levels under control will greatly reduce the risk of developing them.

If you have been asked to carry out a healthcare market research study surrounding diabetes or one of the related conditions, why not give us a call today?





Connecting world-class medical professionals with agencies.

Building a better understanding of medical science by connecting world-class medical professionals from around the globe with leading market research agencies.

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