

**Diabetes is a hormone disorder that can cause problems with the kidneys, legs and feet, eyes, heart, nerves, and blood flow. If left untreated, these problems can lead to kidney failure, gangrene and amputation, blindness, or stroke. Diabetes is on the increase, probably because people are living longer, getting fatter and leading increasingly inactive lifestyles.**

There are two types of diabetes.

### **Type 1 Diabetes**

Type 1 diabetes - also known as insulin-dependent or immune-mediated diabetes - is a disease that destroys the cells in the pancreas that produce the hormone insulin.

Insulin is needed to control blood sugar levels. Without insulin death is inevitable.

Type 1 sufferers, who typically develop the condition as children or young adults, are usually unable to produce any insulin at all.

They need to boost their insulin levels, either by regular injections or by wearing a pump which dispenses the hormone under the skin.

It cannot be administered as a pill because it would be destroyed by the digestive process before it had a chance to work.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Type 1 diabetes often appears suddenly. Signs and symptoms are:

- High levels of sugar in the blood;
- High levels of sugar in the urine;
- Frequent urination (and/or bed-wetting in children);
- Extreme hunger;
- Extreme thirst;
- Extreme weight loss;
- Weakness and tiredness;
- Irritability and mood swings;
- Nausea and vomiting.

### **What causes Type 1 diabetes?**

The cause of the disease is unknown, although there is evidence that it might be inherited.

Other environmental factors and illnesses seem to trigger the disease.

### **Can Type 1 diabetes be controlled?**

People with type 1 diabetes can live happy, healthy lives provided they follow a diabetes treatment plan.

Blood sugar levels must be kept as close to normal as possible through insulin injections, regular exercise and control of diet.

Blood and urine tests will show if the disease is under control. The presence of ketones in the urine indicates that there are problems.

### **Type 2 Diabetes:**

Type 2, or non-insulin dependent diabetes is the most common form of the disease. It usually occurs in people who are over the age of 45 and overweight.

Type 2 sufferers do not make enough insulin, or are unable to make proper use of it.

Without enough insulin, the body cannot move blood sugar into the cells. Sugar builds up in the bloodstream and causes health problems.

### **What causes Type 2 diabetes?**

Again the cause of the disease is unknown, but is probably inherited. As with type 1 diabetes, other factors appear to trigger the disease such as obesity.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Type 2 diabetes often develops slowly. Most people who get it have increased thirst and an increased need to urinate.

Many also feel tired, irritable and nauseous. Some people have an increased appetite, but they lose weight.

Other signs are:

- Repeated or hard-to-heal infections of the skin, gums, vagina, or bladder;
- Blurred vision;
- Tingling or loss of feeling in the hands or feet;
- Dry, itchy skin.

The symptoms can be so mild that they go unnoticed. They may also be confused with signs of ageing. It is thought that millions of people worldwide suffer from type 2 diabetes without realising it.