

# DIABETES AWARE



## Information Sheet 6 – Diabetes and Diet

### Diabetes and Diet 1

Diabetes is a disease in which there is too much sugar (glucose) in the blood. This is because the body is not making enough insulin to meet its requirements, or the insulin produced is not working properly.

Everyone needs some glucose in their blood but in healthy people our hormones, including insulin, control the levels of blood glucose.

Untreated or poorly controlled diabetes means that blood glucose levels rise and if your blood glucose level is too high for too long, your health will be affected.

The food we eat turns into glucose in the blood, so it is important that we follow an appropriate well balanced diet at sensible times. This will help you to manage your diabetes and keep your blood glucose levels within acceptable limits whether your treatment is diet alone, diet and tablets or diet and insulin.

Everyone should eat a healthy diet, but if you have diabetes you may need to make some changes to the foods you would normally choose.

There is wide range of special foods produced for people with diabetes. They can be found in supermarkets, chemists, health food stores etc, which you may see in the chemist or confectioners. These are not recommended, as they are expensive, often high in calories and there is no health benefit in using them.

There are also many low fat foods on the market to help people on low fat diets. It is essential to read the labels carefully on these products as some of them, such as low fat puddings and low fat biscuits are high in sugar and not suitable for people with diabetes. Low fat yoghurts very often have the first ingredient as sugar. Suitable products are low in fat and low in sugar.

If you are overweight, you should try to lose weight. This will reduce your insulin requirements and improve your glucose levels. Even a modest weight loss of 1 - 2 stone (6-12kg) has many benefits.

How to eat to help control your blood glucose levels and stay healthy:

- Eat regular meals - breakfast, lunch and evening meal. Try not to miss meals.
- Include a food containing starchy carbohydrate at each meal.
- Eat some fruit and plenty of vegetables every day.
- Limit your intake of sugar and sugary foods.
- Cut down on fatty foods, especially those rich in saturated fat.
- Reduce your salt intake – don't add salt to food, try using alternative spices/herbs.
- Limit your intake of alcoholic drinks.

### Read the labels on all products.

If sugar, or sugar derivative, is in the first four ingredients try to avoid the product.

Check the fat and salt content of all products – avoid those that have added sugar and salt

For further information on managing your Diabetes please speak to your Doctor or Diabetes Nurse or contact the group. There are links from the Diabetes Website to other sites where you can find out more about topics of interest