

# 15 Healthcare Essentials

## Getting the care you need

If you have diabetes you should receive a series of tests each year to show how you're managing it. You should also be able to access extra care and support if you need to. We call this package of care the 15 Healthcare Essentials.

Every year you and your healthcare team should agree a written plan of care which should include priorities and targets. Take this list to that meeting to make sure you're getting the care you need.

- 1 Get your blood glucose levels measured** at least once a year. An HbA1c test measures your blood glucose management over the previous three months. You and your healthcare team should then set a target for your next test. It's different from testing your own blood with a meter as that only tells you your levels at the particular time of the test. If you do test your bloods yourself then you should have access to all the test strips and equipment you need.
- 2 Have your blood pressure measured** and recorded at least once a year, and agree a personal target that is right for you.
- 3 Have your blood fats (such as cholesterol and triglycerides) measured** every year. Like blood glucose levels and blood pressure, you should have your own targets which are realistic and achievable.
- 4 Have your eyes screened** every year by your local diabetic eye screening service\*. A specialist will take a photo of the back of your eye, your retina, and will look for any changes. This free test is different to the checks carried out by an optician. If you notice any sight changes between appointments it's important to contact your optometrist or GP.
- 5 Have your feet and legs checked.** The skin, circulation and nerve supply of your feet and legs should be examined at least once a year, normally by your GP or practice nurse. You should get extra checks if you experience any problems or have a stay in hospital. You should be told if you're at risk of foot problems, how serious they are and if you need to see a specialist podiatrist or go to the foot clinic.
- 6 Have your kidney function monitored** annually. You should have two tests: a urine test for protein (a sign of possible kidney problems) and a blood test to measure how your kidneys are working.

- 7 Get individual, ongoing dietary advice** from a healthcare professional with appropriate expertise in nutrition. You can also see a dietitian if you wish, just ask. You should be weighed and get any support and information you need to manage your weight, if needed.
- 8 Get emotional and psychological support.** Being diagnosed with diabetes and living with a long-term condition can be difficult. You should be able to talk about any issues and concerns with specialist healthcare professionals.
- 9 Be offered a group education course** near you, on diagnosis or as a yearly refresher, to help you understand and manage your diabetes. If you're unable or don't wish to attend a group course, you should be offered an alternative.
- 10 See specialist diabetes healthcare professionals** to help you manage your diabetes. Diabetes affects different parts of the body and you should be able to see specialist professionals when needed, like a diabetes specialist nurse, dietitian, ophthalmologist, pharmacist or podiatrist.
- 11 Get a free flu vaccination** every year from your GP. Having diabetes means you're more at risk of severe illnesses, like pneumonia, if you get flu. Your care plan should also tell you what to do if you do get ill.
- 12 Receive good care if admitted to hospital.** If you have to stay in hospital, you should receive high-quality diabetes care from specialist healthcare professionals, whether it's due to your diabetes or not.
- 13 Have the opportunity to talk about any sexual problems** you might be experiencing. Diabetes increases the risk of sexual dysfunction in men and women and can be caused by physical, emotional and lifestyle factors, or medication you might be taking. If you're having problems you should be given support, education and any extra help you need.
- 14 If you smoke,** get support and advice on how to quit. Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease and stroke, and smoking further increases this risk.
- 15 Get information and specialist care if you're planning to have a baby.** Your diabetes control has to be a lot tighter and monitored very closely before and during pregnancy. You should expect support from specialist healthcare professionals at every stage from before you start trying to post-natal care.

For more information on the 15 Healthcare Essentials and what to do if you're not getting them, go to: **[diabetes.org.uk/15-essentials](https://diabetes.org.uk/15-essentials)**

For information, advice and support call our Helpline on **0345 123 2399\*\***

Children and young people have their own set of guidelines and should receive care from a specialist diabetes paediatric team. Find out more:

**[diabetes.org.uk/Type-1-essentials](https://diabetes.org.uk/Type-1-essentials)**