

15 HEALTHCARE ESSENTIALS

Essential list of NHS care for adults with diabetes

Make sure you're getting the free NHS checks, tests and support you're entitled to if you have diabetes. We call them the 15 healthcare essentials.

Take this list to your annual review appointment with your healthcare team. Ask them to help you arrange healthcare essentials you may have missed. You'll also talk about how to look after your diabetes between appointments – known as your care plan.

If you're not getting these essentials, have to wait too long between appointments, or aren't happy with your care, contact your doctor or call us for advice.

1 Blood glucose test (HbA1c)

HbA1c is your average blood sugar levels for the past two or three months. Your healthcare team will agree a personal target with you and support you getting there. This will help you reduce your risk of long-term diabetes complications.

2 Blood pressure check

High blood pressure increases your risk of diabetes complications, affecting your heart, kidneys and eyes. Your healthcare team will agree a personal target with you.

3 Cholesterol check (for blood fats)

This shows if you have too much bad cholesterol which can stop blood getting to important organs like your heart. Your healthcare team will agree a personal target with you and support you getting to a healthy level.

4 Eye screening test

Eye screening is different to a normal eye test. A photo is taken of the back of your eyes to see if there are any changes. Screening helps your healthcare team spot any sight problems early so they can be treated in time.

5 Foot and leg check

The skin, circulation and nerve supply are checked. Your legs and feet should be bare. If any foot problems are picked up, you may be referred to a foot specialist. Your own daily foot checks are important too:

www.diabetes.org.uk/how-to-check-feet

6 Kidney tests

- Urine test for protein (a sign of possible kidney problems).
- Blood test to measure how your kidneys are working.

You might not know anything's wrong with your kidneys. That's why it's so important to get them checked.

7 Advice on what you eat

You should get dietary support and information and have your weight checked. If needed, you should be given help to manage your weight. You can ask to see a dietitian for tailored advice.

8 A free flu jab

Don't forget to book yours. This will help protect you from getting the flu. Having diabetes means you're more at risk of getting the flu – and having it worse. It can affect your blood sugar levels, increase your risk of going into hospital, and developing complications like pneumonia.

9 Talk about how you're feeling

Living with diabetes can be difficult. Try to talk to your healthcare team about how you're feeling. You can ask to see someone like a counsellor. Or you can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2399** and speak to a trained advisor.

10 Care from diabetes specialists if you need it

You should have the opportunity to see specialist professionals such as an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) as needed.

11 A place on a diabetes course

There's a lot to learn about diabetes. Going on a face-to-face or online course can help you however long you've had diabetes. Ask your healthcare team what's in your area. And get tips for looking after your diabetes on our free Learning Zone www.diabetes.org.uk/15-learn

12 Get good care if you go into hospital

You should receive high quality diabetes care from specialist healthcare professionals, even if you're being treated for other things. The diabetes inpatient team is there to help you while you're in hospital. Ask the ward staff to contact them if you need their support.

13 Support with any sexual problems

Diabetes can increase the risk of sexual problems in men and women. High blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels which may cause erectile dysfunction in men, for example. Your healthcare team should and can offer support, advice and treatment options.

14 Help to stop smoking

If you smoke, get support and advice on how to quit – your healthcare team can advise you. Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease and stroke, and smoking doubles this risk.

15 Specialist care if you're planning to have a baby

Most women with diabetes have a healthy baby. But you need support from specialist healthcare professionals at every stage – even before you start trying – as both of you are more at risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

To find out more about each of the 15 Healthcare Essentials and what you can do yourself between appointments, go to www.diabetes.org.uk/my-15

For information and support call the Diabetes UK Helpline on **0345 123 2399**