

Diabetes transition pack for young people

**Everything you need to know about
transitioning to the adult diabetes team**



How to contact us

Contact the diabetes team:

Contact details for specialist diabetes nurses

Telephone: 01442 287 442

Email for **NON-URGENT** enquiries:

westherts.paediatricdiabetes@nhs.net

Contact details for diabetes administration team

Telephone: 01442 287 425

Contact details for diabetes dietitian

Email for **NON-URGENT** enquiries:

westherts.paediatricdiabetes@nhs.net

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



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Welcome to transition clinic

Now that you're 15, you have stepped up from the children's clinic to the transition clinic.

The main difference will be you will now see the children's and adult's diabetes team together in clinic. Usually either an adult diabetologist and/or one of the adult diabetes specialist nurses (DSNs) will come to your clinic appointments so you can get to know each other and work towards getting ready to move to the young adult team.

All the care you usually receive from the **children's and young people's diabetes (CYPD) team** outside of clinic will remain the same. The way you contact us and the support you receive won't change, but when you come to clinic it'll be a little busier than usual.

Usually you'll stay with the transition clinic until you've completed your GCSE's and are ready to move to the young adult clinic.

What happens in transition clinics?

There are three steps to the transition clinic, they are as follows:

Step 1 (Your first appointment): This is today! You'll receive information about the transition clinic, meet the adult team and be given a questionnaire to complete before your next appointment. The questionnaire is to help us understand how best to support you moving onto the adult team.

Step 2: Over your next few appointments we can discuss the results of your questionnaire and come up with some goals to help you prepare for the adult team (e.g. attending a clinic without a parent present in the room or collecting your own insulin prescriptions). Once you've completed your GCSE's we will discuss at clinic when you may feel ready to move to the adult service. By this time you'll have been having clinics with the adult and CYPD team for about a year.

Step 3: Once you are ready we can have our final appointment together! This final appointment will be led by the adult team, you'll be offered a tour of where to go for young adult clinic and we can say our goodbyes.

If you have any questions please feel free to ask any member of the team.

Moving to the adult wards

From your sixteenth birthday if, for any reason, you're admitted to hospital you will go to the adult wards. This means that your usual CYPD team won't know you've been admitted. It is important you ask a member of the ward team to inform the adult diabetes team that you've been admitted and they can come and see you whilst

you're an inpatient, although your outpatient care will remain with the CYPD team until you move to the young adult service.

If you visit A&E, but are not admitted to the ward we would still like to know, in case there is any way we can support you to manage your diabetes whilst you're unwell. Please contact your paediatric diabetes specialist nurse (PDSN) even if you are not admitted.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

At this age there are many things that can be stressful and difficult to manage. Pressure at school builds as you get closer to exams, relationships can change, and you are trying to work out what to do in the future. For many young people, this can be a time when they are more likely to notice changes in their mood and stress levels. For young people with diabetes, there is the additional need to manage your health condition more independently and this can feel like a burden at times.

In the CYPD team, there is a clinical psychologist who can offer you support should you notice changes in your mood or your overall wellbeing. When you are age 16 and over, you can also access support from the Hertfordshire Wellbeing Service, who have professionals trained in supporting people who have long-term conditions. You can always go to your GP and ask about the support available if you are finding things difficult too.

Below are some useful websites aimed at young people who might be experiencing mental health difficulties, which might also be useful:

www.kooth.com

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.getconnected.org.uk

www.mindfull.org

Sexual health

If the time is right for you, you may or may not require advice/ information about sexual health. We hope you find the following information useful.

It's always a good idea to tell a new partner that you have type 1 diabetes, so they know what to do in case of an emergency and understand that you might need to stop to treat a hypo. Remember that sex is an exercise. Keep treatment nearby in case of a hypo and make sure your partner knows what to do if you have a hypo.

If you're having sex, then there is a risk of catching a sexually transmitted infection (STI) but you can help reduce this risk. First of all, make sure you always use a condom, whatever form of contraception you're using, as this will help protect you

against STIs. Another option is for both you and your partner to have a test for STIs before you start having sex.

All infections, including STIs, are trickier and may take longer to get rid of when you have type 1 diabetes. If ignored they can have serious consequences and you may pass it on to your partner. So it is a good idea to get yourself checked out if you have any worries. For information on where to get free contraception, STI tests and loads more information see the “Contact Information for local services” section below.

You can find out more about sex and relationships on the Diabetes UK website: www.diabetes.org.uk/theone.

Information from <http://uni.idrf.org.uk/toolkit/sex/>

Contact Information for local services

If you are looking for any more information on sexual health the following services are a really useful place to start:

Sexual Health Hertfordshire – provide clinics or a drop in service for information on contraception, emergency contraception, STI screening, advice and specialist care for psychosexual problems and much more. You can contact them at: <http://www.sexualhealthhertfordshire.clch.nhs.uk/> or call on 0300 008 5522

YC Hertfordshire – provide a drop in service offering free condoms (c-card scheme), free chlamydia testing, free pregnancy testing, healthy relationships programme, sexual and general health advice. You can contact them at: <http://www.ychertfordshire.org/> or call on 0300 123 7538

Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline – an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men and bisexual and trans people. You can contact them at: <https://switchboard.lgbt/> or call on 0300 330 0630

What the diabetes team can help with

At your appointments with the diabetes team we are happy to discuss any concerns or questions you might have regarding sexual health. Although we cannot prescribe contraception, emergency contraception or provide STI screening we can help you find local services if you need this support. We are always happy to talk.

Pregnancy

If you're planning on trying for a baby it is really important to start planning before you start trying to conceive. For women, becoming pregnant with diabetes requires careful planning and tight blood glucose control to ensure a healthy baby and healthy pregnancy. Accidental pregnancies are therefore not advisable so always use contraception. It is vital that you contact your diabetes team if you are planning a pregnancy.

If you think you are pregnant you should contact the diabetes team immediately, as we need to advise you on monitoring your diabetes during your pregnancy. If you don't want to be pregnant, or are not sure you want to be, you can seek advice from your GP or school nurse. However please still do make the diabetes team aware, as we would like to support you during this time.

How does drinking affect my diabetes?

Having diabetes does not mean you can't drink alcohol, but it can affect your affect your diabetes control. Your liver has many jobs including releasing glucose into the blood, gradually throughout the day. Alcohol can hinder the liver's ability to release glucose, increasing the likelihood of having a severe and prolonged hypo. Drinking alcohol can affect your liver for up to 24 hours, including overnight and the following day.

Sometimes drinking alcohol can temporarily increase your blood glucose levels (hyperglycaemia). This is because some alcohol contains carbohydrates for example beers, ciders and spirits with sugar-containing mixers. However we know that in the hours following consumption of alcohol, blood glucose levels will fall quite significantly. Therefore do not correct.

Keeping safe when drinking alcohol

1. Do not give insulin for alcohol
2. Always eat starchy carbs the meal before drinking; never drink on an empty stomach
3. Consider choosing sugar-free mixers
4. You may need to eat some starchy carbs (e.g. bread, potato, rice) during the evening to keep your blood glucose levels up (depending on choice of alcohol and activity levels)
5. Tell at least one person you are with that you have type 1 diabetes, and make sure that they know your signs of hypo and carry medical ID
6. Always carry hypo treatment with you and your blood glucose testing kit
7. Eat a starchy snack before you go to bed e.g. toast, cereal, chips, pizza, kebab
8. Drink plenty of water before you go to bed to keep yourself hydrated
9. Always check blood glucose levels regularly, the feeling of being drunk may be similar to your symptoms of hypo - including the next morning as symptoms of a hypo could be mistaken for a "hangover" e.g. headache, nausea, shaking etc.
10. Always eat breakfast – it will help maintain your blood glucose levels
11. If you are feeling ill please refer to your sick day rules and speak with your diabetes team for further advice.
12. Set limits & stick to them –have sugar-free soft drinks in-between alcoholic drinks
13. Remember being more active e.g. dancing can also increase risk of hypo
14. Do not forget to take your background insulin (if taking injections)

It is illegal to purchase and drink alcohol under the age of 18 years. The following information has been taken from the current government Change for Life programme: “It can be a bit tricky to understand and remember how much alcohol is in drinks, and how this can affect our health. The low risk guidelines can help with this, if you choose to drink. No-one can say that drinking alcohol is absolutely safe, but by sticking within these guidelines, you can lower your risk of harming your health if you drink most weeks: 1) men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units a week 2) spread your drinking over three days or more if you drink as much as 14 units a week”.

Information from “EoE CYP Dietetic Resource Alcohol”

Drugs

Although we would encourage you to avoid drugs, we have included a section on drugs here for your knowledge and hope you find it helpful.

It’s OK to say no to drink or drugs, the majority of young people offered drugs choose not to take them. There are many different drugs around, whilst some drugs were previously known as legal highs the new Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 also classifies these drugs as illegal.

Staying safe

- Remember- no drug is a safe drug. There are risks associated with any drug you take
- Drugs are illegal and there are heavy penalties for possessing and supplying them
- Make sure you have some diabetes ID on you and the people you’re with know about your diabetes
- Have regular soft drinks and water if you’re clubbing
- Have some carbohydrate based food before you go out and when you get in. You might also need to snack during the evening
- Don’t mix drink and drugs
- Make sure you know exactly what you are taking
- Make sure you keep sufficient money to get yourself home at the end of the evening.

Drugs mainly fall in to the following categories

Downers (or depressants) e.g. Sleeping pills, heroin, methadone or cannabis
Downers slow your body down, including your thought processes, heart rate and breathing. The relaxing effect of downers might mean that you forget about or can’t be bothered to take your insulin or do a blood test. The first dose of heroin and methadone can cause vomiting. Also if you inject you run the risk of skin infections that won’t heal properly.

Uppers (or stimulants) e.g. speed, ecstasy, cocaine

Some people use uppers when they're clubbing, to give them more confidence. Uppers give you a high, and if you are dancing continuously, this can cause dehydration as your body loses fluid. However, once the high wears off you can feel depressed, irritable and tired. Heavy users can get run down and suffer from poor skin, weight loss and mood swings. Uppers can suppress appetite and this can cause hypos, especially if combined with dancing. It's really important to eat carbohydrate based foods regularly or drink sugary non-alcoholic drinks and drink plenty of water, approximately a pint an hour.

Hallucinogenic e.g. cannabis (skunk), LSD, magic mushrooms

Cannabis is probably the most common and makes you feel happy, relaxed and sociable. However, after taking it many people feel anxious and uneasy, or even light headed, faint and sick. It can also give you the munchies causing your blood glucose levels to rise or make you feel spaced out and forgetful so you might forget to take your insulin. Cannabis increases the heart rate and can affect blood pressure and there's also increasing evidence of a link between cannabis and mental health problems such as schizophrenia. If you use cannabis frequently, it can reduce a man's sperm count and suppress ovulation in women.

LSD and, to a lesser effect, magic mushrooms can cause hallucinations which can last up to 12 hours. They might be unpleasant or even terrifying, and you can have flashbacks to them in the following weeks and months.

Driving

Learning to drive

Can't wait to get behind the wheel? Take a second to read this before you put on those 'L' plates. As long as your diabetes is well controlled and your doctor confirms this if asked, there's no reason why you shouldn't be issued with a licence. People with Type 1 diabetes get a licence for 1, 2 or 3 years, which can then be renewed.

You must get insurance, and tell your insurance company that you have diabetes. If you don't, it may make your insurance invalid, which would be a disaster if you need to claim. Your premium should not be increased because of your diabetes, and if it is, move your business elsewhere.

Getting into first gear

You'll need a provisional licence before you can start taking driving lessons. And there will be a part on the form to fill out about your diabetes.

It's a good idea to tell your driving instructor that you have diabetes as you'll need to check your blood glucose levels before you drive.

The hypo-highway code

Having a hypo while you are driving a car (or riding a motorbike) can be fatal, not only for you, but for others as well. The DVLA advise you to:

- Check your blood glucose level less than two hours before getting behind the wheel, then again when two hours have passed from your pre-driving check once you have started driving. You will then need to stop and check again every two hours whilst driving. If it's less than 5 mmol/L eat some carbs. If it's less than 4mmol/L don't drive.
- Don't delay or miss a meal or snack.
- If you feel like you are going hypo, stop driving as soon possible. Switch off the engine, remove the keys from the ignition, leave the driving seat, then test your blood glucose levels. Treat your hypo, and don't start driving again until 45 minutes after your blood glucose level has returned to normal.
- Held up? You can't predict traffic jams, but you can pre-empt them by carrying snacks and hypo treatment just in case.
- It's obvious, but: never drink and drive.

Information taken from Diabetes UK, Living my Life - Driving:

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/teens/me-and-my-diabetes/living-my-life/driving>

Please ask a member of the diabetes team for '*Diabetes, driving and the law*' leaflet for more in depth information or visit: <https://www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving>

Useful links

<http://uni.jdrf.org.uk/>

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>