



VASCULAR DISEASE AND DIABETES

Whilst we make every effort to ensure that the information contained in this patient information sheet is accurate, it is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment, and the Circulation Foundation recommends consultation with your doctor or health care professional. The information provided is intended to support patients, not provide personal medical advice. The Circulation Foundation cannot accept liability for any loss or damage resulting from any inaccuracy in this information or third party information such as information on websites to which we link.



Circulation Foundation
 Blackburn House, Redhouse Road,
 Seafield, West Lothian EH47 7AQ
 T: 020 7205 7151
 E: info@circulationfoundation.org.uk

circulationfoundation.org.uk

The Circulation Foundation is an operating division of the Vascular Society, a charitable company limited by guarantee, company number 5060866 and registered charity number 1102769

Vascular disease is as common as both cancer and heart disease and accounts for **40% of deaths in the UK**, many of which are preventable.

SAVING LIVES AND LIMBS
circulationfoundation.org.uk

People who have diabetes are more at risk of getting vascular disease because their blood sugar levels have spent prolonged periods of time being poorly controlled and higher than normal. In turn, this affects the lining of the body's arterial walls, making the inside of the blood vessels more likely to furl-up causing them to narrow (atherosclerosis).

People with type 2 diabetes are also more likely to have raised triglyceride levels and low HDL cholesterol which also increase the risk of atherosclerosis.

So what is diabetes? There are two types:

Type 1 diabetes (also referred to as early-onset, juvenile or insulin-dependent diabetes). Children and young adults are most likely to develop the condition over a short period of time (days and weeks). Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas stops releasing insulin. It is treated with insulin injections and a healthy diet.

Type 2 diabetes (also referred to as late-onset, maturity-onset or non-insulin-dependent diabetes).

It is most likely to develop in those over the age of 40-years-old (but can occur in younger people). It is more likely to affect those who are obese or overweight. The illness and symptoms of Type 2 diabetes tend to develop gradually (over weeks or months). Unlike Type 1 diabetes the pancreas still produces insulin, but it may not be as much as the body requires, or the body's cells are not able to use the insulin properly. This is called insulin resistance.

If have diabetes, how can I prevent the risk of other complications like vascular disease?

In general, the closer your blood glucose level is to normal, the less likely you risk developing complications. Your risk of developing complications is also reduced if you deal with any other 'risk factors' that you may have such as:

- **high blood pressure**
- **smoking**
- **being overweight**
- **high cholesterol levels**
- **an unhealthy diet**
- **lack of exercise**
- **stress**

Therefore you may wish to do the following:

- **Keep active**
- **Eat a healthy diet and control your blood sugar levels**
- **Lose weight if you are overweight**
- **If you smoke, kick the habit**
- **Keep an eye on your blood pressure**
- **Be aware of any new conditions or changes in your body**
- **Have regular medical examinations, at least once a year**
- **Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor**

What is a diabetic foot ulcer?

Diabetic foot ulcers affect many people with diabetes. It's believed that 1 in 10 people with diabetes will have a foot ulcer at some point. The ulcers are patches of broken skin usually on the lower part of the leg or on the feet that become infected. For those with diabetes, wounds on the legs and feet are less likely to heal; this is partly because of damage to the nerves caused by fluctuating blood sugar levels.

Effects of serious foot ulcers

In the worst cases, some people with diabetes may have to have an amputation as the result of an ulcer. Less serious foot ulcers can take a long time to heal and cause a great deal of discomfort.

How to prevent diabetic foot ulcers

Taking good care of your feet is crucial in preventing diabetic foot ulcers. It is recommended that people with diabetes should have their feet checked at least once a year by a doctor or healthcare professional.