

# ACTION UPDATE

## Update 7: Diabetes

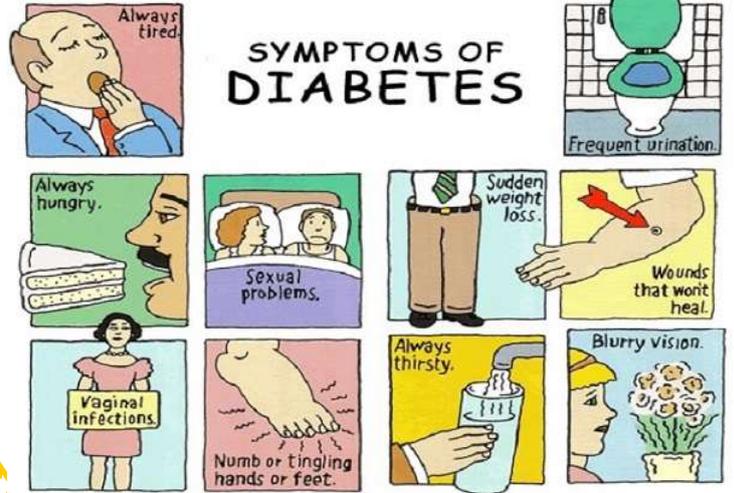
### Groundswell's Action Updates

Groundswell's Peer Advocates support homeless people to attend over 1,400 health appointments a year. Each month our **Action Updates** highlight a topic which homeless people have told us is important and offers practical advice around the issue. The guidance and quotes are based on what our Peer Advocates see first hand when working with homeless people to improve health.

Fold 3

### Key facts on Diabetes

- About 1 in 16 people in the UK have diabetes and the numbers are increasing.
- **Eating healthily & regular exercise** are key to avoiding & managing diabetes if you are diagnosed.
- **Early diagnosis** of diabetes is key to management.
- **If you have diabetes** the risks of many other health problems are increased. You should **have a check up with diabetes specialists at least once a year.**
- Drinking doesn't cause diabetes, but it does **carry the risk of making diabetes worse.**



Fold 1

### Diabetes - Groundswell's Experience

Groundswell's Peer Advocates work with many people who have complex health needs. They regularly see the negative impact that diabetes has on the people they work with.

*"Often when I see him he's a bit sleepy because he doesn't always take his medication properly. He's in a hostel so his key worker reminds him to take his medication. It's really important for key workers to know the symptoms."*

*"Since I was diagnosed I've been in touch with a dietician. He gave me advice on what to eat so I don't eat the fat off meat or skin off chicken. I've lost 10 pounds so they're happy."*

*"Exercise is important I really feel the benefit of losing weight. Every time I come off the tread mill I feel better even though I'm tired so it's beneficial all round."*

### Groundswell

Groundswell exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and to play a full role in our community.

### Homeless Health Peer Advocacy

Groundswell works to improve the health of homeless people. Peer Advocates, who have been homeless themselves, can go with you to physical health appointments to help you to get the best service from the NHS. Practically we can offer you:

- Help to make health appointments
- Go with you to your health appointments
- Pay for your travel fares if needed.



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Call our office on: 03000 039 600.  
Email us at: [info@groundswell.org.uk](mailto:info@groundswell.org.uk)

# ACTION UPDATE!

## Update 7: Diabetes

**Diabetes is no fun to have, so it's best not to get it in the first place. Eating well and exercising will prevent the risk of getting it. If you have diabetes then it's even more important to have a healthy lifestyle and get regular check ups to prevent diabetes leading to other health problems.**

### What is diabetes?

- Diabetes is a condition when the body is not able to properly process the energy you get from food. Normally your pancreas converts sugars, called **glucose**, into a form the body can use - a chemical called **insulin**. This means the body doesn't get the energy it needs and glucose builds up in the blood.
- 3.9 million people in the UK have diabetes and the numbers are increasing. There are two main types of diabetes, Type 1 and Type 2. **Most people in the UK have Type 2.**
- **The risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases if you are older, overweight, have high blood pressure, have a family history of diabetes, or are Black African or Black Caribbean.**

### What can I do to avoid diabetes?

- A lot of the risks around diabetes can be controlled. **Eating more healthily, getting regular exercise and cutting down on alcohol and tobacco use will reduce your chances of getting diabetes.**

*"Diabetes can affect your feet and your eyesight. I've got to go for a diabetic eye screening. It's no problem for me it's better to check so I know."*

### What are the symptoms of diabetes?

**The main symptoms are:** feeling thirsty; urinating more frequently than usual; feeling very tired; weight loss and loss of muscle; itching around the penis or vagina; slow healing cuts or wounds and blurred vision. **If you think you might have diabetes get a test quickly as it will get worse without treatment.**

### What can diabetes lead to?

- **If you have diabetes the risk of developing other health problems increases.**
- **Common problems include:** heart disease; stroke; dementia; nerve damage; foot ulcers; blindness; chronic kidney disease; skin problems; damage to breast tissue in women; blood circulation problems – which, in the most serious of cases, can lead to gangrene; muscle-wasting and damage to your joints.
- **Diabetes increases the risk of blindness: You should have an eye screening test at least once a year.**

### How do you manage diabetes?

- If diagnosed with diabetes, **changes to your lifestyle can be the best way to manage it.** It's really important to **be active and eat a good diet.**
- You may also be prescribed **medication.** It's really important to take this as your doctor recommends. You should also **meet with your treatment team at least once a year for a check up on your diabetes so that it can be best managed.** If you smoke you should be offered help to stop.

### Alcohol & Diabetes

- Drinking doesn't cause diabetes, but it does **carry the risk of making diabetes worse.**
- To reduce risk of a 'hypo' (when your blood glucose levels go too low) **avoid drinking on an empty stomach, make sure the people with you are aware you have Diabetes and eat a starchy snack before going to bed.**
- Drinking alcohol can cause a number of issues with diabetes: **Heavy drinking can worsen eye conditions** caused by diabetes. It can **interfere with some diabetic medications** and make them less effective. Alcohol abuse can **worsen the nerve damage caused by diabetes and lower tolerance to pain.**
- **Beer and wine contain particularly high amounts of sugar so should be avoided.**

**For more information on diabetes visit: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/> or call Diabetes UK on 0345 123 2399.**

*"I know for myself that when I was on the street I would want to have a beer so I would miss my medication. You have got to start making the right choices for yourself."*



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