

# Type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes in Sweden. Developing a chronic disease can affect us emotionally and life with diabetes will inevitably involve some changes. The disease is most common in middle aged people and older men, but type 2 diabetes is now also being seen in young people.

## What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease which occurs when you do not have enough of the hormone insulin and/or your sensitivity to insulin is reduced. Insulin is a hormone which lowers your blood sugar levels. Decreased insulin sensitivity means that your body does not use insulin effectively, which causes your blood sugar levels to rise over 7 mmol/l before breakfast.

Common to everyone who develop diabetes is that their blood contains too much sugar (glucose). The body's organs, blood vessels and nerves are damaged by excessively high blood sugar levels over long periods of time. It is therefore important that you test your blood sugar on a regular basis.

## Why did I get type 2 diabetes?

The risk of developing the disease increases with reduced physical activity and obesity. Today, we have access to food whenever we want it and we do not move about as much as we used to. In such conditions the heredity factor contribute to developing diabetes.

## How can I manage my diabetes?

You need to learn a lot about diabetes but you can take it one step at a time. You decide how you want to live your life but the health service is also responsible for providing you with knowledge and

treatment. Diabetes should not stop you from leading a fulfilling life.

The aim is to maintain your blood sugar at the level that you with your diabetes nurse/doctor have agreed is right for you. You can monitor your blood sugar to make sure you stay within the range you have agreed on.

You can manage your blood sugar levels with physical activity, by balancing what you eat and maintaining your weight. Having a normal weight and being physically active help prevent cardiovascular disease and makes it easier to maintain a suitable blood sugar level.

Smoking and using snuff (nicotine) reduce your insulin sensitivity and raise your blood sugar level. Smoking also affects your cardiovascular system and can cause myocardial infarction and stroke.

## What kind of help is available?

- Type 2 diabetes is normally followed up at primary health care center. You will meet a physician once a year and a diabetes nurse once a year. A dietitian and podiatrist will also be available when needed.
- When you develop diabetes, you will need to learn a lot about the disease. The diabetes nurse at your primary health care center will usually help you with this.
- All persons recently diagnosed with type 2

diabetes will be referred for fundus photography, regardless of whether or not they are having changes in their eyesight.

- A foot examination will be carried out by a diabetes nurse or a podiatrist. Your blood circulation and nerve function will be checked and you will be given advice on how to care for your feet.
- You will be provided with help to stop smoking/ taking snuff if you wish.

### What should I eat?

Blood sugar level is affected by a number of factors, including what you eat. Awareness of your meal proportions and spreading the meals over the day will help you maintain stability in blood sugar levels.

It is recommended that you eat:

- Plenty of vegetables, beans and lentils.
- Fruit and berries daily, but limit yourself to 1-3 portions of fruit.
- Wholemeal bread.
- Limited amounts of potatoes, rice and pasta. Rice and pasta should preferably be wholegrain.
- Fish, both as a sandwich filling or topping and as a meal.

Water is the best thirst-quencher but you can drink any kind of naturally sugar-free beverages, coffee and tea without sugar and milk, and beverages which have been sweetened with artificial sweetener such as soft drinks.

### Why is physical activity so important if you have type 2 diabetes?

Physical activity lowers your blood sugar, improves

the good cholesterol in your blood and reduces your blood pressure. You should ideally be physically active for at least half an hour a day. Go for a walk or try to find another activity which you enjoy.

### What kind of complications related to my diabetes might I experience?

If your blood sugar level is too high over a prolonged period of time, you may experience changes in your blood vessels, e.g. in your heart, kidneys, eyes and feet. You may also experience changes in your nerve function. In the worst case scenario, these changes can lead to cardiovascular diseases such as myocardial infarction and stroke, reduced kidney function, eyesight problems or wounds on your feet which take a long time to heal. It is therefore important that you visit your physician or diabetes nurse regularly to monitor your diabetes.

### Some useful information

- For a person without diabetes the blood sugar level is between 4 and 7 mmol/l during the day.
- Factors that affect your blood sugar level include physical activity, diet, sleep and stress.
- You are entitled to free aids to enable you to measure your blood sugar level at home.

### You should discuss the following when you visit the diabetes nurse or doctor:

- How do I measure my blood sugar level at home?
- What is the right blood sugar level for me?
- What can I do to make sure my blood sugar level is right?