

type 1 diabetes and eating disorders

What is Type I Diabetes?

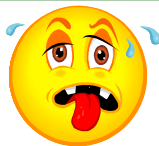
Glucose from the food we eat is passed from the blood stream to cells in the body that require glucose to function. Insulin acts as a transporter. It allows glucose to be carried from the blood stream to these cells.

People with Type I Diabetes cannot produce insulin, as their immune system has destroyed the cells in the pancreas that perform this function. As a result, their body is unable to transport the glucose in the blood stream to the cells that need it. Consequently, glucose levels in the blood stream become abnormally high.

Risks of not managing your Type I Diabetes as directed.

In the short term ...

Hyperglycemia (too high levels of blood-glucose) causing: excessive thirst, frequently passing large volumes of urine, tiredness, weakness, weight loss & blurred vision.



Hyperglycemia can occur due to missing insulin doses, over-eating, lack of exercise, emotional stress or illness.

If not treated quickly, blood-glucose levels may continue to rise, causing diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA is the process by which the body breaks down fats for fuel because it has no insulin to allow it to use glucose. Toxic chemicals called ketones are produced, which may lead to nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, rapid breathing, bad breath, confusion and if untreated coma.

Hypoglycemia (too low levels of blood-glucose) causing: weakness, shaking, light headedness, headache, poor concentration, tearfulness, numbness around lips and fingers, sweating, dizziness, irritability, and hunger.

Hypoglycemia can occur due to delaying/missing meals, not eating enough carbohydrate, exercising more than usual, taking too much insulin, and drinking alcohol.

If not treated quickly, blood-glucose levels may continue to drop causing: loss of coordination, slurred speech, confusion, loss of consciousness and fitting.

In the long term.....

heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, tooth and gum disease, neuropathy and blood vessel damage leading to foot problems and limb amputation.

How eating disorders affect Type I Diabetes.

Eating disorders make managing diabetes more complicated, increasing the likelihood of both the short and long term health problems outlined above.

Restricting your food intake, vomiting, using laxatives or excessively exercising can make it difficult to determine the right amount of insulin to administer. If too much insulin is taken severe hypoglycemia may result.

Skipping insulin doses so that calories are lost through urine will lead to high blood-glucose levels possibly causing DKA, which can be life threatening.

Binge eating (especially too many carbohydrates) can increase blood-glucose levels, possibly leading to DKA.

How your eating can help

It is crucial to maintain a healthy diet. The food you eat is used to produce glucose in your body, so eating a well balanced healthy diet will help manage your blood glucose levels.

To maintain a healthy diet when you have diabetes, it is important you:

- Regularly eat meals and snacks, and spread your carbohydrate foods evenly over the day. Eating regularly will prevent your glucose levels from fluctuating.
- Eat meals and snacks that contain low GI (glycaemic index) carbohydrates. These include: wholegrain breads and cereals, beans, lentils, dairy products and fruit.
- Eat foods low in saturated fat. Saturated fat is found in foods such as full cream milk and cheese products, butter, and fatty meats. It is recommended that you eat reduced fat dairy products and lean meat, avoid butter and fast foods, and limit your intake of processed meats and desserts.

Recommendations for care

- Test your blood glucose levels regularly
- Follow your doctor's instructions in relation to: insulin injections, tablets (blood pressure, cholesterol etc).
- See a dietitian with diabetes expertise.
- Be active wherever possible



Developed in conjunction with Kate Fleming, Dietitian

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