HEALTH FOR TEENS

NHS
Leicestershire Partnership
NHS Trust

Diabetes and Eating Difficulties

Information for young people and their families or carers.



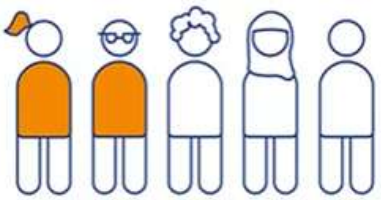
You have been given this leaflet as either you, a loved one or your diabetes team have some worries about your eating. We know that living with diabetes comes with a long list of challenges which can lead to young people feeling angry, frustrated, low in mood or anxious. Diabetes means an increased focus on food choices, meal routines and portion sizes to achieve good blood glucose control. Counting carbs can mean a lot of time and effort to calculate the carb content for each meal. This also means lots of dealing with numbers and figures which might feel overwhelming at times.

With so much focus on the type of food eaten to maintain healthy blood sugars, some people might develop an unhealthy relationship with food which may over time lead to unhelpful eating patterns. These may include restricting what you are eating, binge eating (eating lots in a short space of time) or using food to cope with emotions. These behaviours may also be seen alongside Lots of checking of weight and body image focusing on weight and body image.

Over time and without support, these difficulties could lead to ‘disordered eating’. There can be lots of reasons disordered eating can develop.

It is estimated that 2 in 5 people with Diabetes have at some point experienced difficulties with eating behaviours.

You are not alone!



According to Diabetes UK and Beat (the leading eating disorder charity), you or the loved ones around you might notice that you:

- Notice more problems around: reading food labels more often
- Are obsessively reading food labels.
- Are skipping meals.
- Have frequent mood changes or signs of stress.
- Have difficulty managing blood sugar levels or your insulin.
- Stop attending clinic appointments or engaging with your medical team.
- Have Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) episodes.
- Feel the need to exercise without providing yourself with the needed nutrition.

Emotionally, you might find yourself withdrawing or isolating from others, feeling more anxious or low in mood and overwhelmed with all the demands of diabetes (known as 'burnout').

Why does this happen?

Several factors[1] contribute to disordered eating in Diabetes, including:

- **Food** - Having diabetes involves thinking about food a lot of the time. This might look like carefully reading food labels or a constant awareness of the amount of carbohydrates in the food you eat to make sure you give the right amount of insulin. Treating hypos involves eating when you might not feel hungry, and this can sometimes

[1] Some information taken from the BreakthroughT1D website

cause emotional feelings of guilt and shame about eating, weight and body image.

- **Weight and body image** - Managing your diabetes might lead you to spend a lot of the time thinking about your body. Monitoring glucose levels and weight, and technology being visible may lead you to focus more on your body and the way it looks.
- **Control** - Having diabetes might make you feel out of control of your body; some days you might do everything you can to manage your sugars, but they are still hard to get under control.

Other reasons include:

- Pressure to meet certain body image ideals. We see lots of things in the media that might contribute to how we think our body should look.
- A fear of gaining weight. Your height and weight is monitored more when managing diabetes to make sure your diabetes is under control.
- To cope with other distress and burnout from managing diabetes.
- The stress of managing diabetes and growing up.
- A fear of hypos.
- Feeling different to peers.



Tips to support you

Taking care of both your physical and emotional health is important in managing Diabetes. If you are struggling with eating behaviours or body image concerns, remember you are not alone, help is available.

Eating difficulties can lead to serious consequences to your diabetes care such as unstable blood glucose levels and an increased risk of physical and mental health complications, such as depression and anxiety so it is important that you are offered early help if you notice any of the warning signs.

- Have a look at the helpful resources available on the First Steps ED website who provide early intervention and prevention support for people affected by eating difficulties. They have a really useful section around understanding body image: **https://firststepsed.co.uk/**
- Contact a helpline: 0808 801 0677 | help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk
- Learn more about these issues from an animation created by people experiencing similar difficulties. Search 'Swimming with T1DE' on the internet or on YouTube.
- Seek emotional support when feeling overwhelmed about diabetes and body image.
- Talk to a trusted adult about how you are feeling.
- Work with your healthcare team to address any concerns you have about your eating. They might ask you to complete a questionnaire called the 'SEEDS' to understand some of the difficulties you are experiencing. You can also ask your team about completing this.

You can try some self-care tips too

These can include

- Journaling
- Connect with nature
- Mindful movement
- Muscle relaxation
- Breathing (e.g. box breathing)
- Guided Imagery (safe place, beach, forest, colours)
- Create a self-soothe box

You can visit www.healthforteens.co.uk/feelings/self-care/ to learn more about self-care.



If accessing this leaflet online, you can use our accessibility toolbar. The toolbar is especially useful if you have a hidden disability, such as dyslexia (or other reading difficulties), a visual impairment or have English as a second language. If you would like to access this leaflet digitally, please speak to a member of our staff.

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille, or audio, please speak to a member of our staff.

We warmly welcome any comments and suggestions you may have. To share your feedback, speak with a member of our team, fill out our Friends and Family Test or reach out to our patient advice and liaison service (PALS). For more information about PALS, please visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk/contact/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/.

Our PALS and complaints team is here to help you with any compliments, questions, comments, or concerns you may have relating to our services. They can also:

- provide confidential advice and support to patients and service users, their families and carers
- listen and respond to any compliments, comments or suggestions and provide information about services and local support groups
- help to resolve concerns on your behalf
- give you information on how you can get involved in helping us to develop our service.

To speak with PALS, contact them by:

- calling 0116 295 0830 (Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4:30pm). You can leave a voicemail message at any time, and they will call you back.
- emailing: lpt.pals@nhs.net

Why not follow our social media account?
Search for '**healthforteens_leicester'** on Instagram to stay up to date with our latest content.

Here are some useful resources for young people and their families or carers:

SCAN ME	Information discussed during appointments will be kept confidential (this means we will keep your information within certain limits). Please scan the QR code or visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk/privacy-policy/ to learn more about our Trust's privacy policy.
	www.leicspart.nhs.uk/mental-health/
	www.nhs.uk
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