



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds and York Partnership **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

What do I need to know about diabetes?

easy
read



Supported by

DiABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

Before you read this booklet:

This booklet has been made to SUPPORT conversations about diabetes. It is not a stand alone resource to be handed out without conversation. We recommend you follow these instructions to get the most out of this resource.



While you are reading:

This booklet is written in sections. After each section please stop and ask the questions provided for that section at the back of the booklet. Discuss with the person what they have understood and go back over the text and images if they have struggled to understand. The booklet can be used in sections to cover one particular topic.

After reading this booklet:

Review what you have learnt with the person with diabetes. Ask them any of the questions you have not asked before. After some time has passed return to the booklet and review what you know. Remind them they can look after their diabetes, especially now they know more about why they need to think about diabetes when eating and moving more.

Please look at www.diabetes.org.uk/learning-disability for further information and resources on this topic.



Finding out you have Diabetes



We asked people to share their experience of finding out they had diabetes.



This is what one person had to say about what happened when they found out they had diabetes.

“

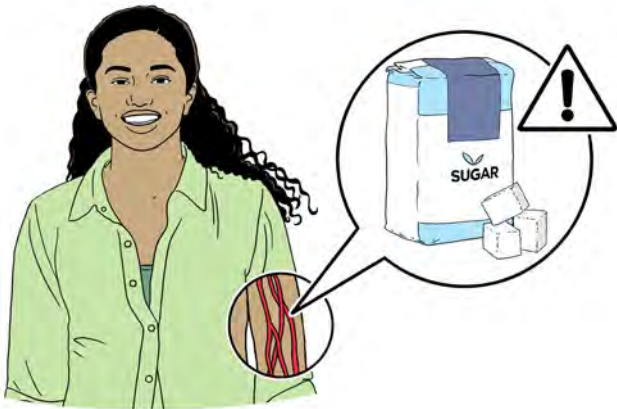
When I found out I had diabetes, I was shocked. I couldn't fully take it in.

The doctor spoke mainly to my mum and used lots of jargon.

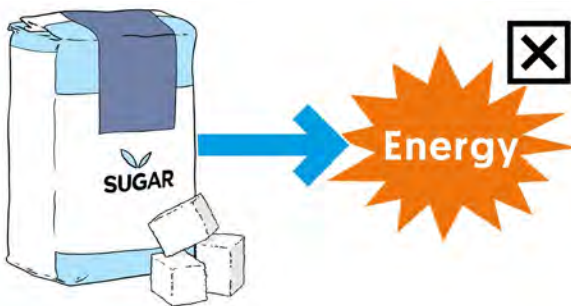
I found it hard to manage my diabetes. I didn't know what food to have.

”

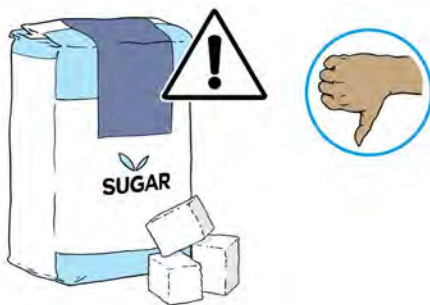
What is diabetes?



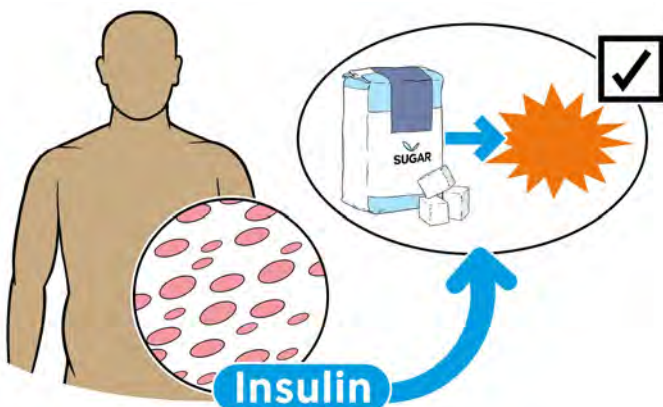
Diabetes is an illness that means there is too much sugar in your blood.



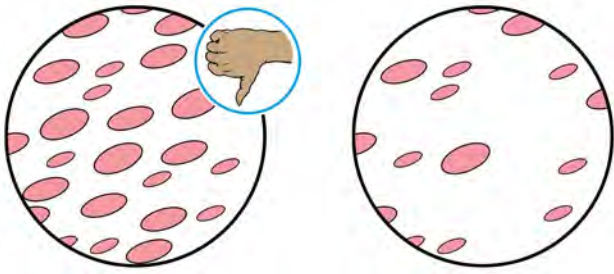
Your body can not turn the sugar into energy, so it stays in your blood.



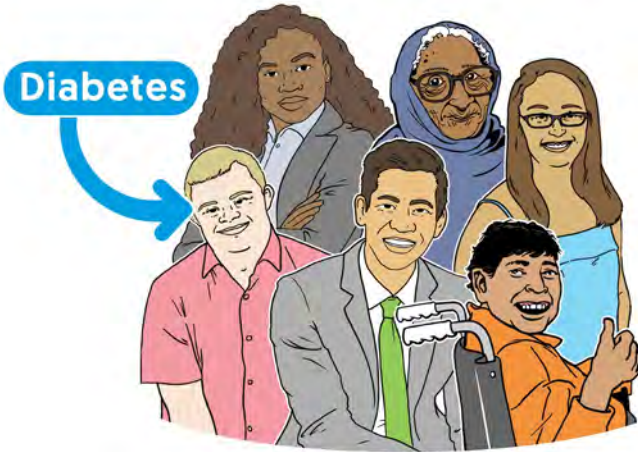
This causes problems.



Normally your body makes something called **insulin**. **Insulin** helps you to turn your blood sugar to energy.



When you have diabetes your insulin is not working properly, or your body is not making enough insulin.



Diabetes can happen to anybody.

You can live well with diabetes



When you have diabetes you need to make some choices.



These choices are about:

Taking medicine



Going to health checks



What food you eat

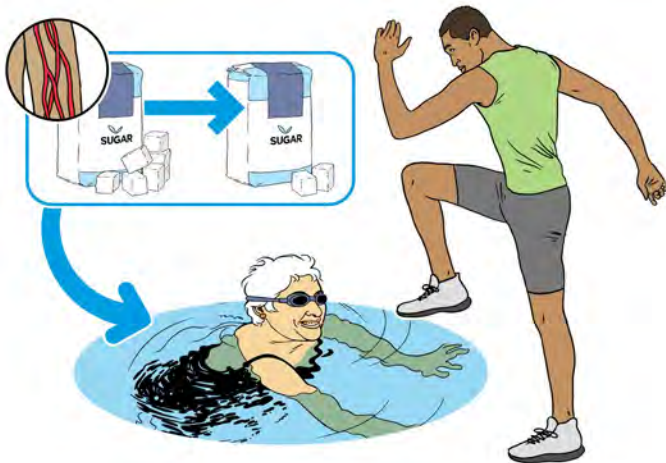


Keeping active

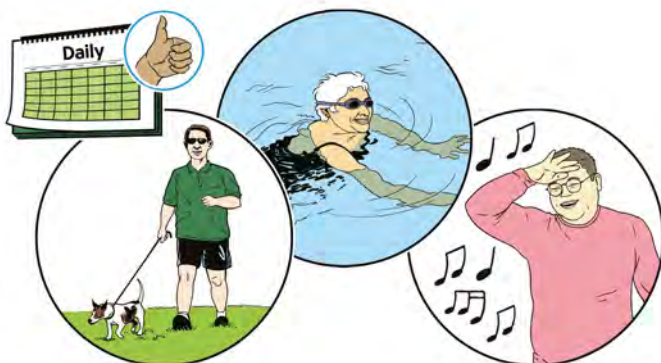
You can choose how much sugar you put in your blood by eating healthy food.



You can use up the sugar that is in your blood by moving more and being active.



Keeping active every day takes the sugar out of your blood. This can be things like walking, swimming or dancing

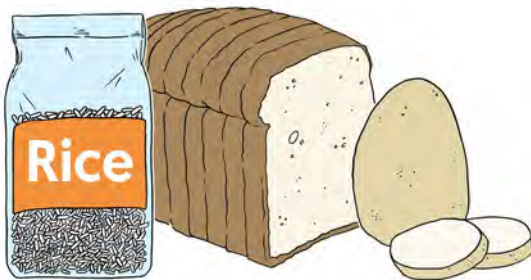




You can eat less food and drinks that have sugar in them.



You can eat less **carbohydrates** because these turn to sugar in your tummy.



carbohydrates are foods like rice, potatoes, or bread.



Healthy food, healthy drinks and small meals will help you stay healthy.



Having a lot of sugar in your blood can make you feel unwell



Diabetes can make you:

Feel tired



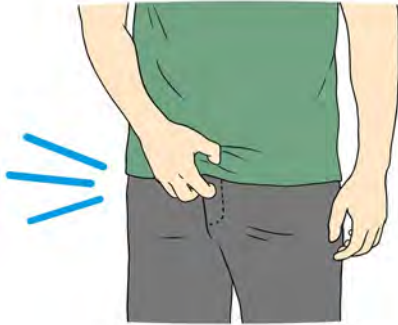
Feel thirsty



Wee a lot



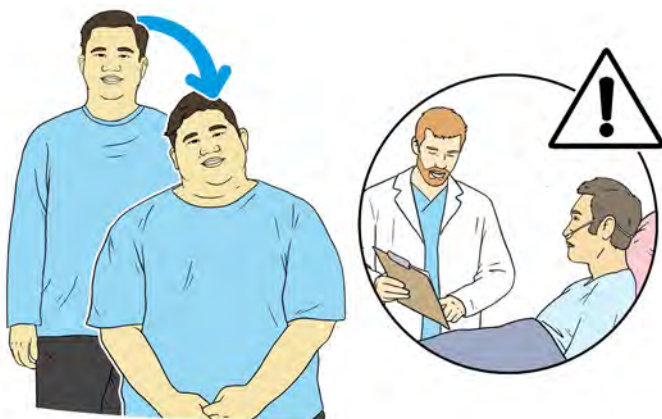
Have blurry eyesight



Have Itching down below in your genitals.



If you choose to eat unhealthy food and do not keep active you could get very unwell with diabetes.



You will gain weight and you may end up in hospital because of diabetes.



There are some things you can do to stay well.

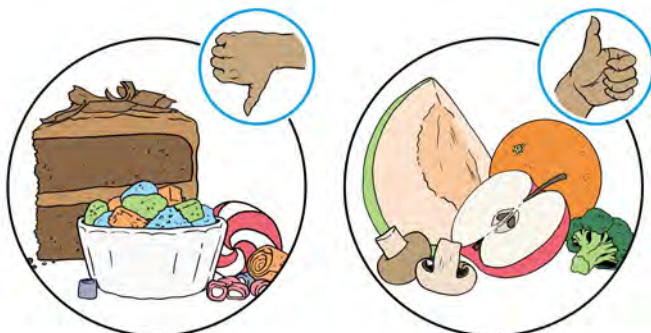


You can:

Eat regular meals



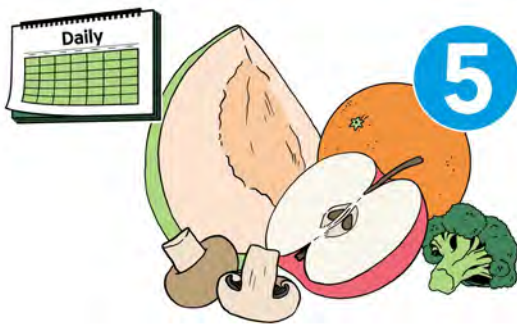
Keep active and move more



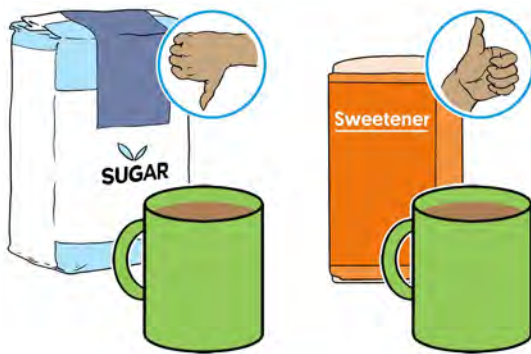
Choose healthy foods



Eat fruits and vegetables, beans and lentils, meat, fish and dairy products



Try to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day



Use sweeteners in your drinks instead of sugar



Do not drink large amounts of alcohol



Drink water and no sugar drinks



You should get help to stop smoking if you smoke.

Regular health check ups



It is important to have regular check ups.



You should go to get your blood checked when your doctor tells you to. They will normally tell you in a letter.



You should see your doctor or nurse at least once every year for a full check up.



You can say no if there is a part of the health check you do not want to do.

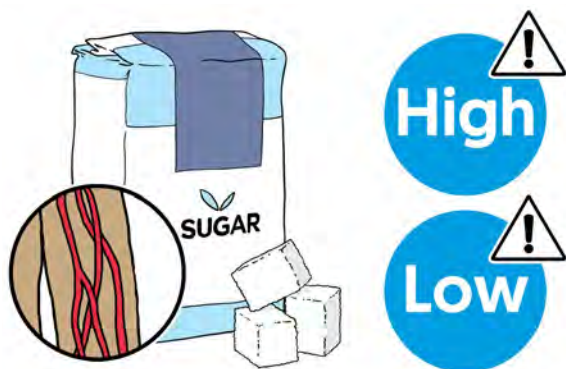


Remember, your doctor is there to help you.

You and diabetes



Sometimes diabetes might make you feel unwell.



This could be because your blood sugar is too high or too low.

Your mood and diabetes



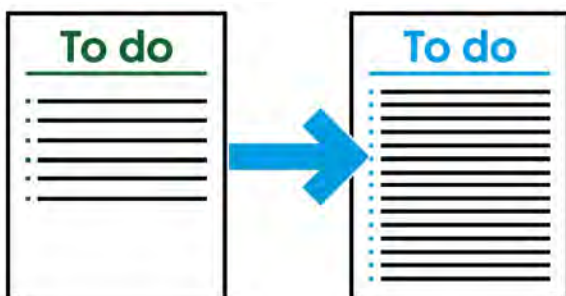
It is normal to feel sad or worried if you have diabetes.



Diabetes can feel difficult to live with.

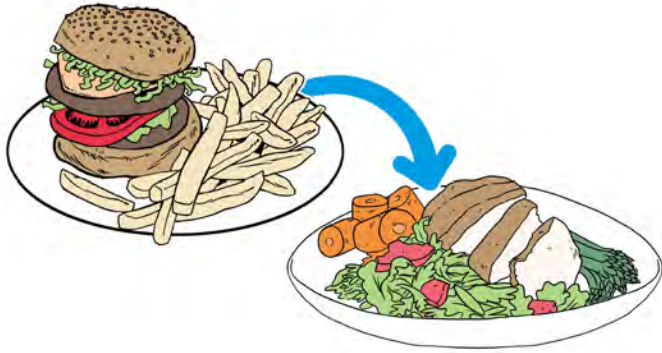


It is normal to not feel **motivated**. Feeling **motivated** means that you feel that you want to and are able to do something.



You might feel sad because:

You have to do things differently



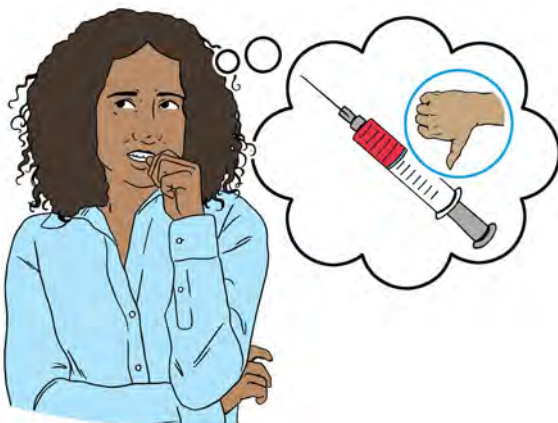
You have to eat different foods to what you are used to



You might have to take medicine



You might have to check your blood sugars

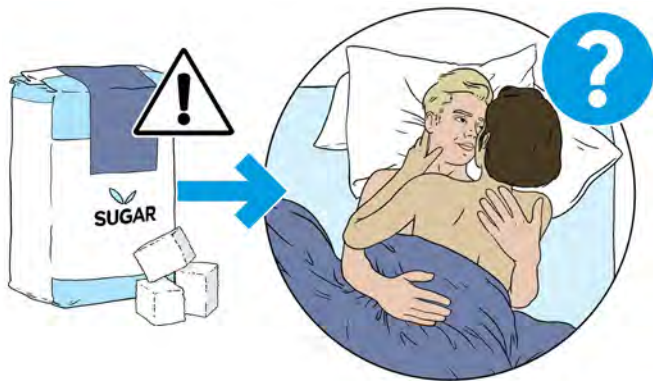


You might not like blood tests

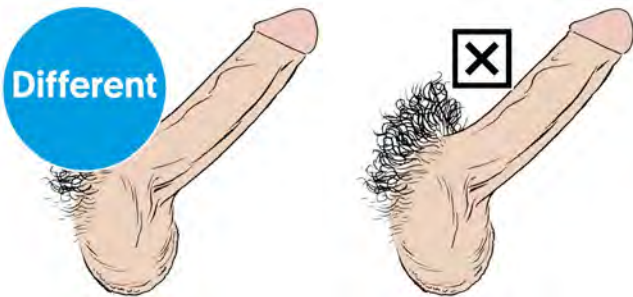


If your mood makes you too sad to look after yourself tell your Doctor or Nurse.

Relationships and your body



Diabetes can lead to many changes in your sex life:



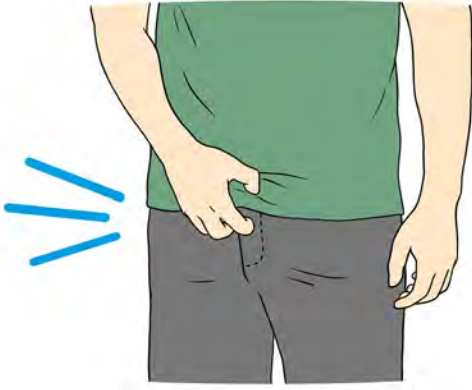
Your **erection** may be different or it might be hard to get an erection



An **erection** is when your penis becomes hard and bigger than normal.



Vaginal dryness may happen. This is when your vagina is dryer than normal.

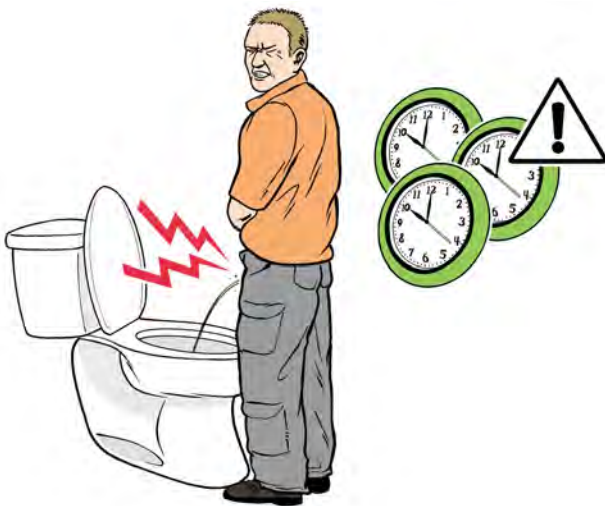


You may have **thrush**.

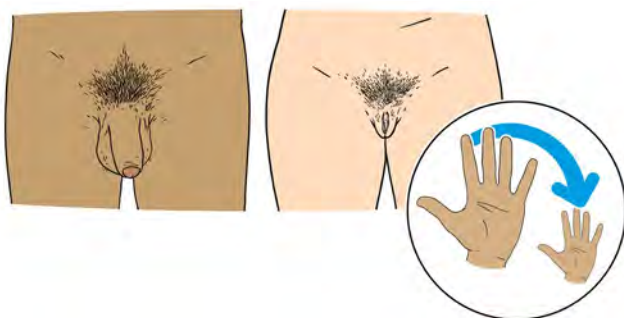
Thrush is an infection which can cause itchiness in your genitals, and pain during sex.



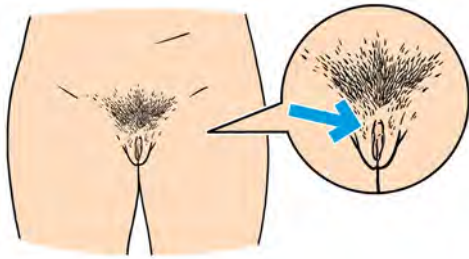
You may have a **urine infection**. This is more common in people who have diabetes.



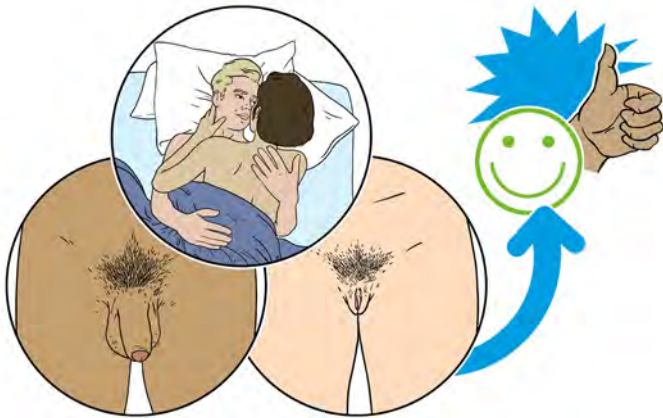
A **urine infection** can make it hurt when you wee, or make you need to go more often.



You may lose some feelings in your penis or **vulva** making it harder to **orgasm**.



Vulva means the outside parts of female genitals.



An **orgasm** is a strong feeling of pleasure you may feel during sex or while touching yourself.



Changes in your sex life can be difficult. They can make you feel like you do not want to have sex or that you can not have sex.



It is not easy dealing with all these feelings.



There is support for you. Talking to a doctor or nurse can be the first step.



If you have any questions about diabetes or you want support you can call Diabetes UK on:

0345 123 2399

Pregnancy and diabetes



If you plan to get pregnant, you need to tell a doctor before you get pregnant.

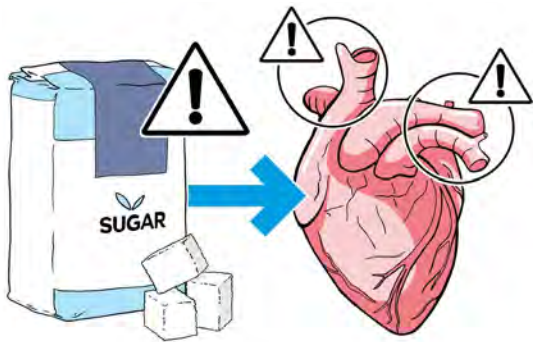


If you find out you are pregnant then you should tell your doctor as soon as you can.

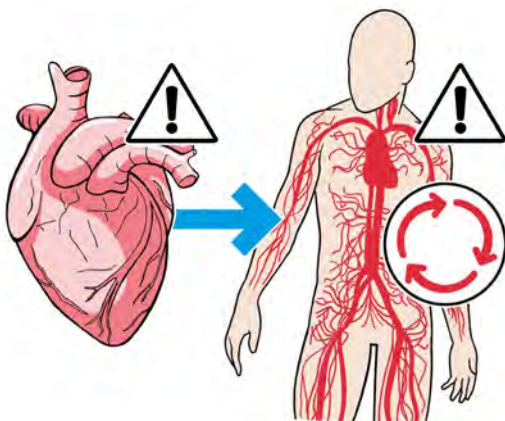


You may need medicine or your medicine may need to change to keep you and your baby safe.

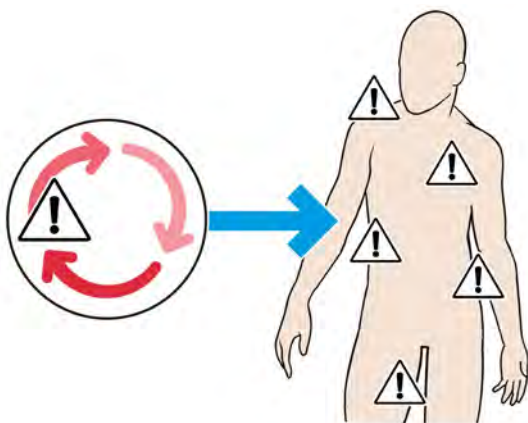
Heart health and diabetes



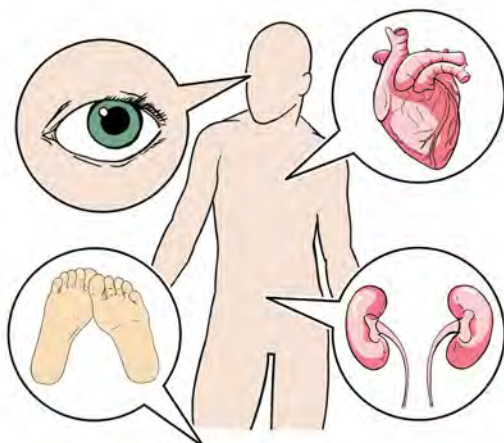
When you have diabetes, it can damage the tubes that carry blood to your heart.



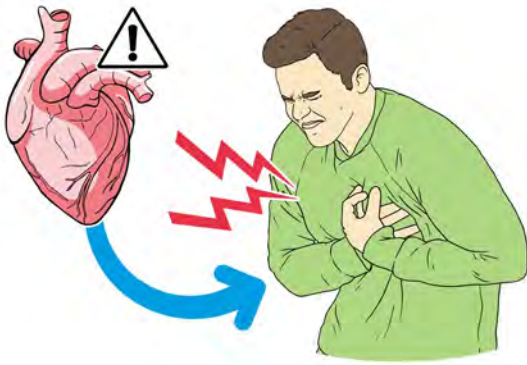
This can change the way that blood moves around your body.



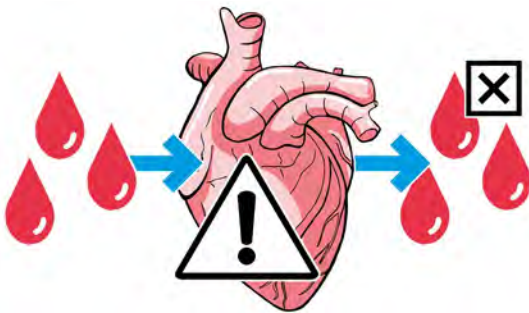
This can cause problems all over your body.



It can affect heart and kidneys as well as your eyes and feet.



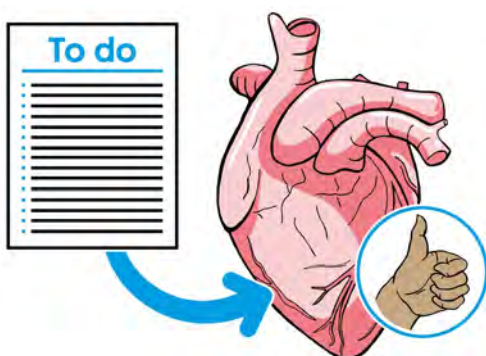
If your heart gets very damaged it can cause a **stroke** or a **heart attack**.



A **stroke** or a **heart attack** is when blood is blocked and can not get around the body like it needs to.



This can be very serious and you may have to go to hospital.



There are things you can do to keep your heart healthy.



You can stay healthy by seeing your doctor or nurse for check ups.

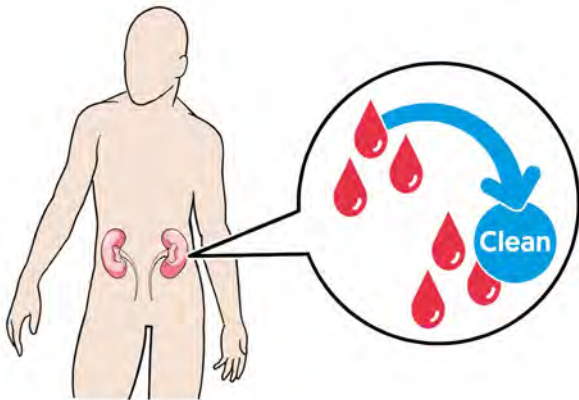


Get help to stop smoking. Smoking makes it harder for blood to flow to your heart.

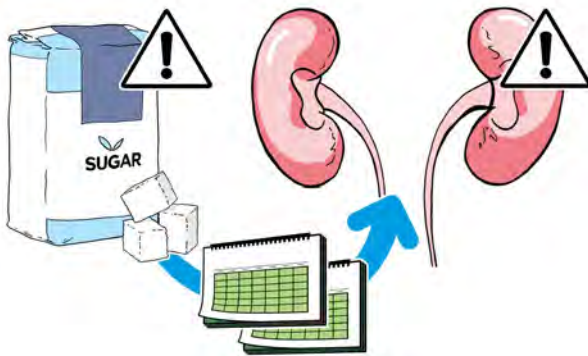


Eat a healthy diet and move more. You could try walking, dancing, swimming or running.

Kidneys and Diabetes



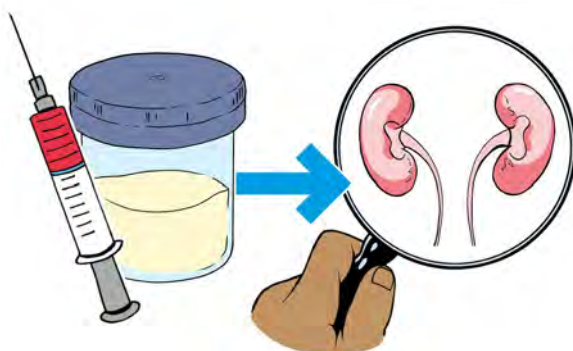
Kidneys are important, they are an organ that helps to clean our blood.



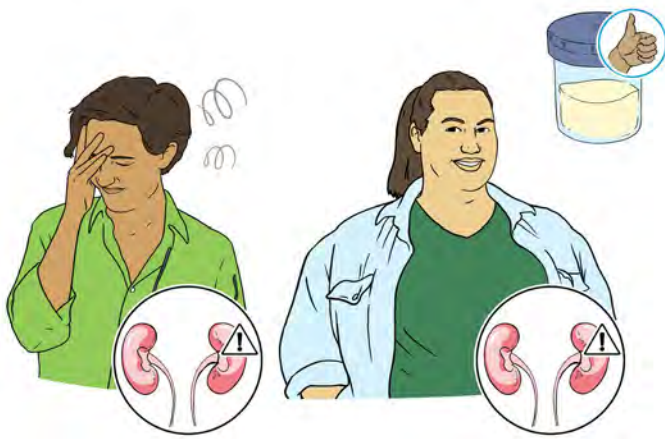
Over time diabetes can cause damage to our kidneys.



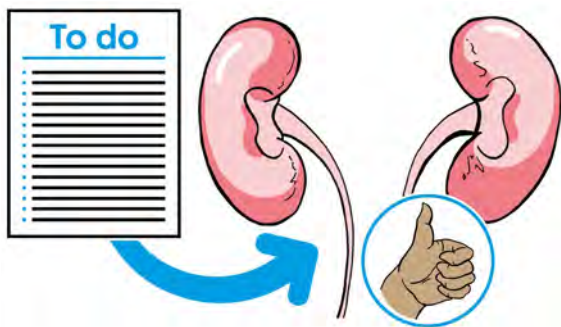
It is important to have a urine test and blood test to check your kidneys every year.



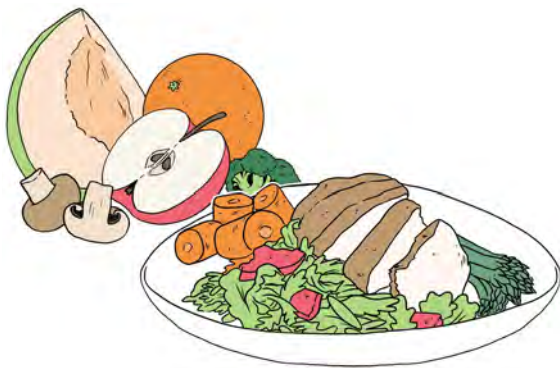
The urine test and blood test will see if there is any damage to your kidneys.



You might not feel unwell with kidney damage. That's why you need to bring in a urine sample when you are asked.



There are things you can do to lower your chances of kidney damage, or try to stop kidney damage getting worse.



You can:

Eat healthy food



Keep active and move more



Get help to stop smoking



See a doctor or nurse for check ups.

Feet, teeth, skin and diabetes



Feet

Having diabetes means you may have problems with your feet.



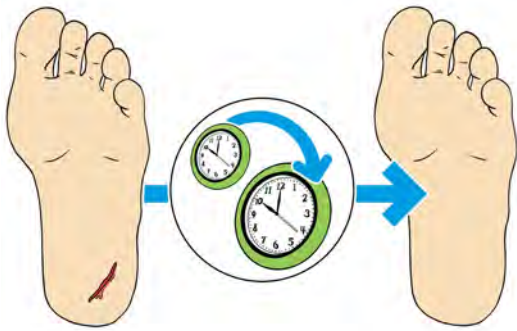
You may get **nerve damage**, this can make your feet feel different. You might not feel it if you get a cut on your foot.



Nerves are what tell your brain what you feel when you touch something.



If your nerves are damaged they may not be able to communicate with your brain the way they are supposed to. This is called **nerve damage**.



Diabetes can make it harder for cuts to heal.

Things you can do to help:



You can wear footwear that does not rub



You can change your socks every day.

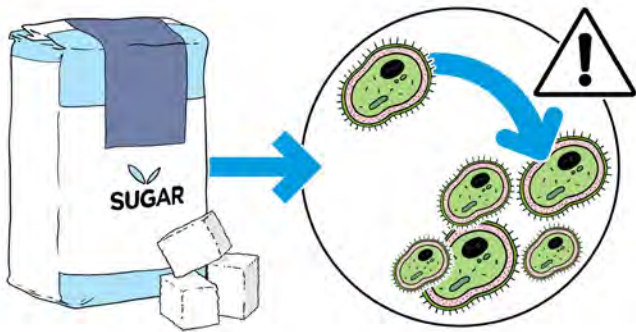


You can check your feet for cuts every day.

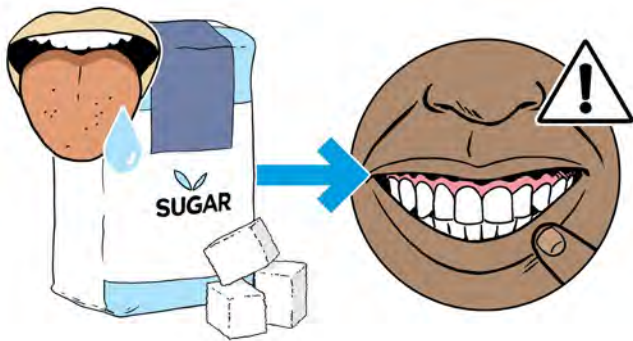


Teeth

Having diabetes leads to more sugar in your spit.



Bacteria and fungus grow fast where there is sugar.



Too much sugar in your spit can damage your tooth **enamel** and gums,



Enamel is the thin outer covering of your teeth, it helps to protect your teeth.



An infection called thrush can grow in your mouth. It causes white spots or patches inside your mouth.



Things you can do to help:

You can brush your teeth twice a day.



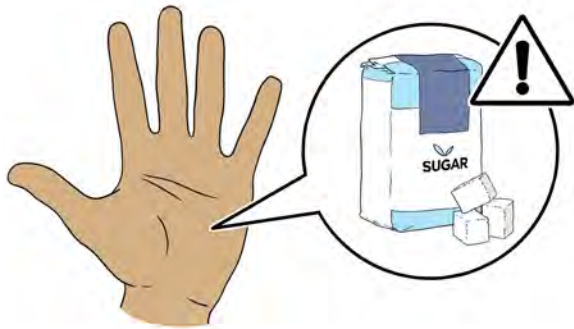
You can see the dentist at least once a year for a check up.



If you are worried about going to the dentist tell them and they can help.

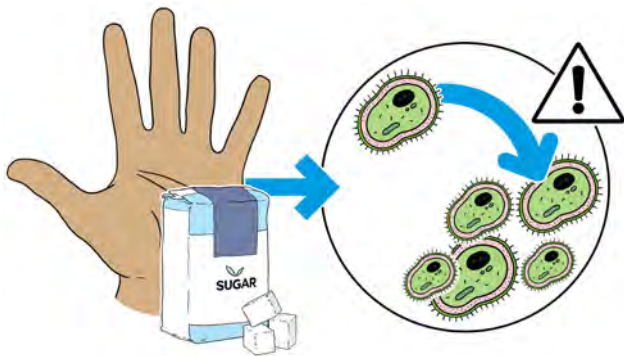


You can eat less sugary food and drink less sugary drinks.

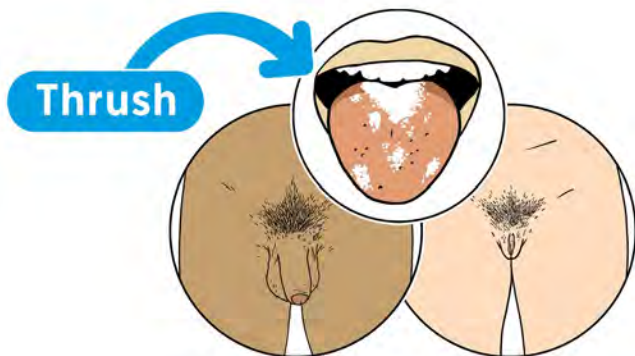


Skin

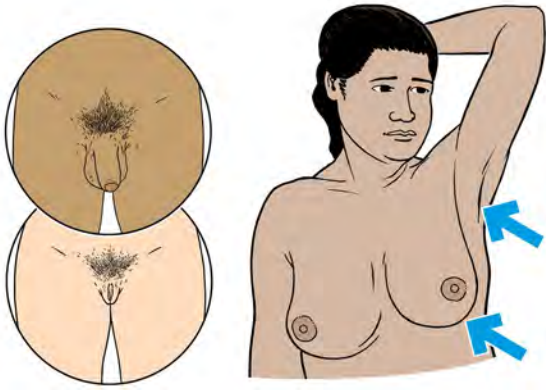
Diabetes can make your skin have too much sugar on it.



Bacteria and fungus like sugary skin and they grown more on it.



You can get thrush in your mouth, vagina or penis, and other parts.



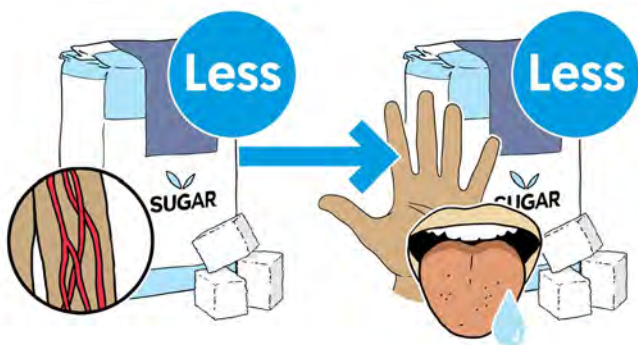
Thrush likes sweaty skin and grows fast in armpits, under breasts and in genitals.



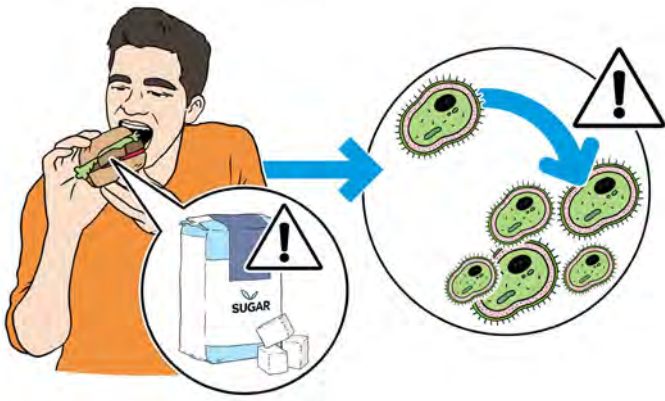
It can make you very itchy or sore.



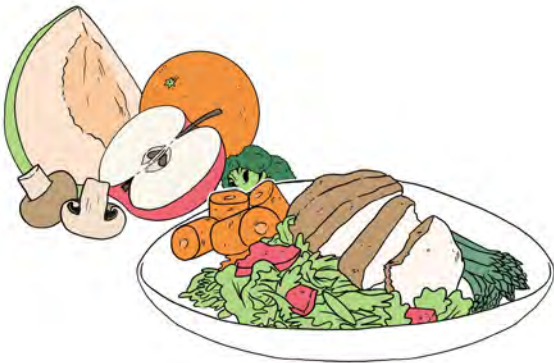
A Pharmacist can tell you what to do to get rid of thrush.



To lower the sugar on your skin and in your spit you need to have less sugar in your blood.



If you eat lots of sugar it will help the bacteria and thrush to grow.



Things you can do to help:

You can eat healthy food.



You can move more and keep active.



You can get help to stop smoking.

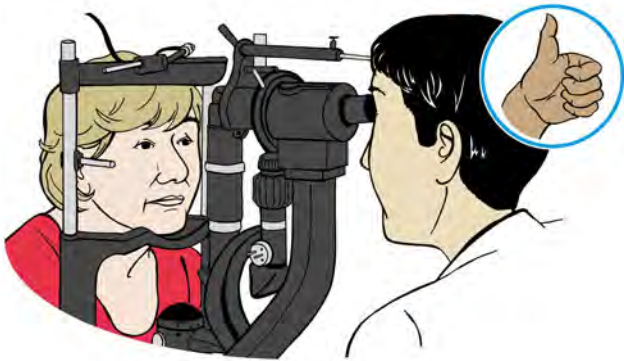


You can see a doctor or nurse for check ups.

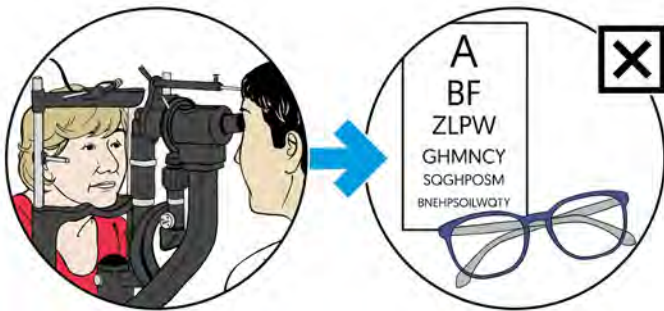
Eyes and Diabetes



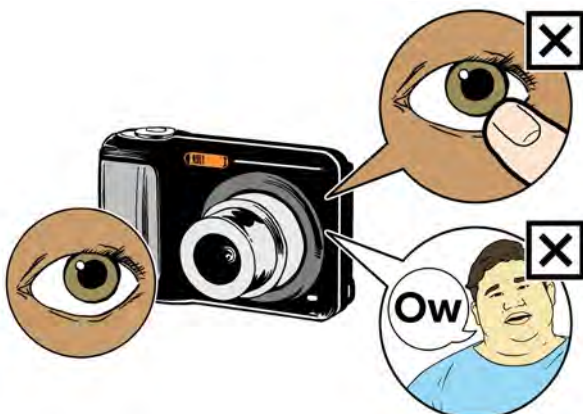
When you have diabetes it is important to get your eyes checked every year. This is called the **Diabetic Eye Screening Test**.



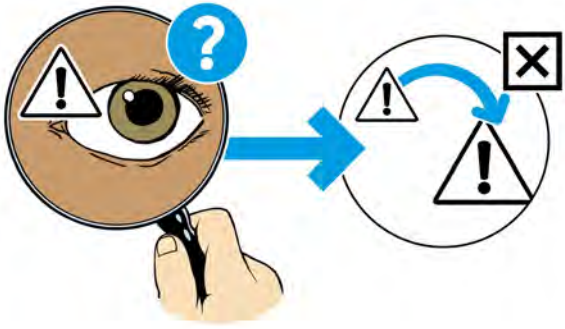
The diabetic eye screening test is important.



This is different from an eye test for glasses.



The doctor will take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera does not touch your eyes and the test does not hurt.



It can find problems early and stop them from getting worse.



Sometimes your eyesight may become blurry making it harder to see clearly.



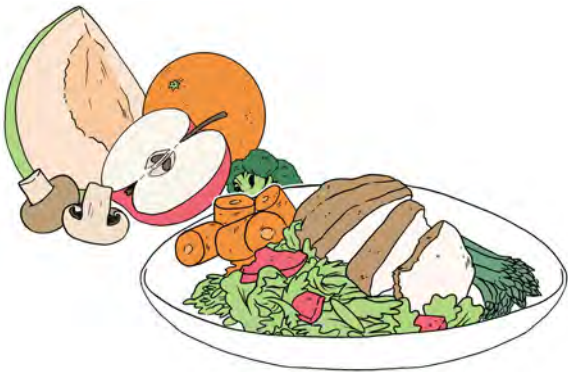
Your eyesight can sometimes become patchy. This means you may not be able to see in some parts but can see in others.



These eye problems can cause blindness if they are not treated.



You need to tell your doctor if your eyesight changes.



Things you can do to help:

You can eat healthy food.



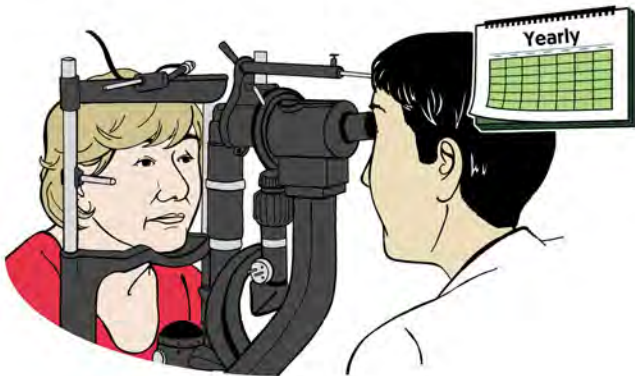
You can move more and keep active.



You can get help to stop smoking.



You can see a doctor or nurse for check ups.



You can go to your diabetes eye screening test every year.



If you are worried about going to eye screening tell your doctor or nurse.

Review what you have learnt

Now you have read this booklet

Please talk about the following things and go back through the booklet to look for the answers.

General

1. What is diabetes?
2. What does your body make to change sugar in your blood into energy?
3. When you have diabetes do you have too much or too little insulin?
4. When you have diabetes do you have too much or too little sugar in your blood?
5. How does lots of sugar in your blood make you feel?
6. What can you do to get less sugar in your blood?
7. What can you do to use up the sugar in your blood?
8. What can you do to stay in control of diabetes?

Mood

9. Can diabetes affect your mood?
10. How does diabetes make you feel? (please discuss this from their perspective as well as the leaflet)

Relationships

11. Can diabetes affect your relationships?
12. How does diabetes change the way your genitals feel?

Pregnancy

13. If someone is planning to have a baby and has diabetes do they need to tell a doctor?

Heart

14. What can diabetes do to your heart?
15. How can you look after your heart when you have diabetes?



Kidneys

- 16.** What can diabetes do to your kidneys?
- 17.** How can you look after your kidneys when you have diabetes?
- 18.** Does the Nurse want a wee sample when you go for a diabetes check up?

Feet, Teeth and Skin

- 19.** What can diabetes do to your feet?
- 20.** What shoes and socks should you wear if you have diabetes?
- 21.** What can diabetes do to your teeth and mouth?
- 22.** How can you keep your mouth and teeth healthy if you have diabetes?
- 23.** What can diabetes do to your skin?
- 24.** What can you do to keep your skin healthy if you have diabetes?

Eyes

- 25.** What can diabetes do to your eyesight?
- 26.** How do you look after your eyes when you have diabetes?

Conclusion

27. What are the best ways to stay healthy when you have diabetes?



We hope you have found this booklet helpful

Supported by

DiABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

This leaflet has been made by:

**Dr Amy M. Russell, Prof. Allan House, Prof. Louise Byant and
Jinan Rabbee at University of Leeds.**

Supported by:

**Diabetes UK. It's our mission to tackle diabetes, day in and
day out, until it can do no harm. It's why we campaign for
better care, give support in times of need and fund
ground-breaking research into new treatments and a cure.
Diabetes doesn't stop, so neither do we.**

This leaflet was funded by:

**Leeds and Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust as
part of the EDICT project at the University of Leeds.**