

Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 14th November 2024

14th November 2024

World Diabetes Day – Diabetes and Wellbeing

On November 14th¹ every year, World Diabetes Day aims to raise awareness of the condition across the globe. This year the importance of maintaining health and wellbeing is the key theme, focusing upon

- Promoting comprehensive support
- Addressing mental and emotional health
- Emphasising the need for a holistic approach to care provision.

The number of people diagnosed with diabetes has been rapidly rising around the world, including amongst children and young people. While Type 1² is the most frequent in children, Type 2 is becoming more prevalent in children and young people linked to the increase in obesity in under 19year olds^{3,4}.

Approximately 1 in 400 children is diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, with over 400,000 people in the UK currently living with Type 1 diabetes⁵. In 2019 it was estimated that 36,000 of these were children and young people.

Early recognition is vitally important. Many children and young people first present in Diabetes Keto Acidosis (DKA) . Diabetes UK urges wider health messaging to educate the public of the potential onset of Type 1 diabetes – ‘Thirsty, Tired, Thinner, going to the Toilet a lot’⁶.

Those with Type 1 diabetes require insulin injections or an insulin pump to regulate their blood sugar levels because they are unable to produce insulin. If poorly controlled, diabetes is associated with long term conditions including eye and kidney disease, heart disease and stroke.

Regular health checks are crucial to assess blood sugar, cholesterol levels and kidney function. An annual foot check and regular eye screening is also crucial to identify any problems.

Many children and young people experience emotional issues such as depression and anxiety, a fear of hypoglycaemia, behaviour changes as a result of fluctuating blood

¹ November 14 was the birthday of Sir Frederick Banting who discovered insulin in 1922.

² See Diabetes UK for information about the types of diabetes - <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

³ See <https://stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk/evidence/long-term-conditions/>

⁴ See <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/health/diet-and-exercise/overweight-children/latest/>

⁵ See <https://breakthrough1d.org.uk/>

⁶ See <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-the-basics/types-of-diabetes/type-1/symptoms>

sugar levels and eating disorders. Access to specialist psychological and emotional support is crucial.

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses calls on the Government to ensure children and young people have access to

- specialist multidisciplinary teams including specialist diabetes children's nurses, psychologists and dieticians
- school nurses to support education staff to understand diabetes management thereby reducing disruption to children and young people's education
- up to date technologies such as insulin pumps and glucose monitors associated with better outcomes

"The 'monopolisation of life' was one of the themes identified in systematic review and synthesis of qualitative evidence focusing on parents' experiences of caring for a young child with type 1 diabetes⁷. The review found that diabetes had an "all-encompassing impact" on parents due to the "constant worry they experienced and the perceived need for vigilance". Such monopolisation of parents and children's lives can be mitigated by expert support and education and children's nurses along with the multidisciplinary team have much to contribute from diagnosis and beyond".

Professor Bernie Carter, President

Notes for editors

The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to 25 years of age

The ABPN recognises that primary and community services, as well as child public health and mental health services, including school nurses and health visitors also have a key role in supporting children, young people and families.

Diabetes UK - <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

Breakthrough T1D - <https://breakthrough1d.org.uk/>

RCPCH - <https://stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk/evidence/long-term-conditions/>

The ABPN is a network of children's nurses with a wide membership of experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research. It is the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938.

www.abpn-uk.com

X (formerly Twitter): @ABPN_ChildNurse

Facebook: Association of British Paediatric Nurses

Tik Tok: @ABPN_ChildNurse

YouTube: @ABPN_ChildNurse

⁷ Kimbell, B., Lawton, J., Boughton, C., Hovorka, R., and Rankin, D. (2021). Parents' experiences of caring for a young child with type 1 diabetes: a systematic review and synthesis of qualitative evidence. BMC Paediatrics' 21, 160. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-021-025>