



# **PATIENT NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020**

## **Paediatric Diabetes Team**

We understand that many of you are particularly concerned about Coronavirus (Covid-19) as you have a child with Type 1 diabetes.

Our advice to you is to follow the government guidelines and to keep yourself updated with the latest developments at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – there is a coronavirus update daily at 2pm.

If a child with Type 1 contracted the virus then it could potentially be more serious for them than for someone who does not have any underlying health conditions but children currently do not seem to be as severely affected as the elderly population.

If you do have any concerns that your child is showing any of the symptoms (detailed below in red) then please dial 111 for assistance – Do not under any circumstances bring your child into the hospital or to your GP surgery.

Please see below information taken from the DUK website which you may find helpful.

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – advice for people living with diabetes**

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**Updated 10th March - A number of you have been in touch looking for advice relating to the global Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19)**

outbreak. We have developed this detailed advice on coronavirus for people living with diabetes with NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Public Health England.

## Specific advice on coronavirus for people living with diabetes

Coronaviruses can cause more severe symptoms and complications in people with diabetes, as well as in older people, and those with other long term conditions such as cancer or chronic lung disease.

If you have diabetes and you have **symptoms such as a cough, high temperature and feeling short of breath**, you need to continue taking your insulin and call the NHS 111 phone service.

If you have diabetes and have been travelling abroad, and you think you may have been exposed to Coronavirus, follow the most up-to-date advice on what to do which can be found on the NHS or government websites [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

If you have diabetes and you become unwell for any reason, it's important that you follow 'sick day rules'.

### Sick day rules

- Contact your Diabetes team, who will help you if you have any queries or if you are unsure about what to do.
- Follow the advice of the Diabetes team regarding your medication if you feel unwell.
- If you have type 1 diabetes, are unwell and have blood glucose over 8mmol/l, check your ketones and follow the sick day rules. If ketone levels remain high on 3 consecutive occasions then contact your diabetes team.
- Keep eating or drinking – if you can't keep food down, try snacks or drinks with carbohydrates in to give you energy. Try to sip sugary drinks (such as fruit juice or non-diet cola or lemonade) or suck on glucose tablets or sweets like jelly beans. Letting fizzy drinks go flat may help keep them down. If you're vomiting, or not able to keep fluids down, get medical help as soon as possible.

## **Attending routine appointments**

People with diabetes should continue to attend their routine appointments as normal – unless they hear otherwise from their local GP practice, hospital or diabetes team.

# **Coronavirus Q&A**

## **People living with diabetes**

### **Question 1: Do I need to do anything differently to the general public living without diabetes in regard to coronavirus?**

We recommend everyone follows the NHS advice around reducing the risk of picking up infections including thoroughly washing your hands frequently, practicing good hygiene and avoiding contact with people who are unwell.

Coronaviruses can cause more severe symptoms and complications in people with diabetes, as well as in older people, and those with other long term conditions such as cancer or chronic lung disease.

If you are worried you might have been in contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, call 111 (England, Wales and Scotland) or 0300 200 7885 (Northern Ireland).

### **Question 2: The NHS website says the symptoms and complications of coronavirus can be worse in people with diabetes.**

Coronaviruses can cause more severe symptoms and complications in people with diabetes, as well as in older people, and those with other long term conditions such as cancer or chronic lung disease. The risk of death from coronavirus is quite low, and the majority of people with coronavirus will have a comparatively mild illness.

It is important that people with diabetes follow the sick day rules should they become ill from any illness.

### **Question 3: What will happen to my diabetes appointments? Will they be postponed? Should I still go to hospital and GP appointments?**

The NHS will continue to provide diabetes appointments as normal, therefore people with diabetes should continue to attend appointments as normal. In the event of any disruption you will be informed ahead of your appointment by your local GP practice or hospital.

#### **Question 4: What are the symptoms likely to be?**

The NHS outlines the common symptoms of coronavirus on its website. These symptoms are the same for people living with diabetes. Coronavirus can have serious effects on anyone who has a long term health condition or a weakened immune system. Follow advice on avoiding catching or spreading germs as above.

**Get advice straight away if you are in contact with someone with confirmed with coronavirus, or if you need medical help**

#### **Question 5: What should I do if my clinician is diagnosed with coronavirus?**

If your clinician is diagnosed with coronavirus and you have not seen them recently, then you are unlikely to have been exposed to coronavirus. The risk associated with any healthcare workers who become infected with coronavirus is assessed on a case by case basis and appropriate action taken. You should follow the advice given to you if you are contacted because you have been exposed to coronavirus in this way.

#### **Question 6: Should I go to work / not see friends / not see friends who've travelled from affected areas?**

We recommend everyone follows the NHS and government advice around reducing the risk of picking up infections, including following the latest guidance on avoiding crowded places if this becomes necessary, or coming into contact with the condition.

We recommend everyone follows the NHS and government advice about what to do if they are concerned they have come into contact with someone with the coronavirus.

The Foreign Office has the most up-to-date information about how different countries are affected.

#### **Question 7: What if I have travel planned or a holiday booked to one of the affected areas – am I more at risk if I do travel?**

The Foreign Office has the most up-to-date information about how different countries are affected.

## **Family, friends or carers of people living with diabetes**

**Question 8: I have been exposed to the virus and am a carer for someone with diabetes. What should I do?**

We recommend everyone follows the NHS advice around reducing the risk of picking up infections including thoroughly washing your hands frequently, practicing good hygiene and avoiding contact with people who are unwell.

If you have been in close contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, call 111 (England, Scotland and Wales) or 0300 200 7885 (Northern Ireland).

If you are advised by 111 staff or other medical professionals to self-isolate then this would include minimising close contact with others.

**Question 9: I am a carer to someone with diabetes. Should I be doing anything differently?**

We recommend everyone follows the NHS advice on reducing the risk of picking up infections including thoroughly washing your hands frequently, practicing good hygiene and avoiding contact with people who are unwell.

## **The future**

**Question 10: If the pressure on the NHS grows, will my appointments be delayed, or will I have problems accessing my medication?**

The NHS is continuing to provide diabetes appointments as normal. In the event of any disruption, clinicians will always make decisions to prioritise treatment for those most in need and in consultation with patients. Local health systems will also put in place contingency arrangements to best support patients. The NHS has conducted extensive work on supply chains to ensure a secure supply of necessary drugs.

The government action plan, issued on 3 March, says that if transmission of the virus becomes established in the UK population, the nature and scale of the response will change: “The chief focus will be to provide essential services, helping those most at risk to access the right treatment. This means that treatment and the requirement for medicines and other clinical countermeasures might start to increase, with the need to draw down on existing stockpiles of the most important medicines, medical devices and clinical consumables.”

## Gerry Bennet – End of an era

On a lighter note, our wonderful dietitian, Gerry will be retiring at the end of March. Gerry wanted the piece below which she has written to be added to the newsletter. I am sure you all wish her a very happy retirement.

As some of you may be aware I will be retiring at the end of March after working 20 years in Sheffield Children's Hospital Diabetes Team.

It is not possible to say a personal goodbye to you all and I am not very good at goodbyes: I have a very wobbly bottom lip and get very teary!

I am not sure where all the time has gone, all I do know is that it has been a great team to work with and you as young people and your families/carers have made my life and career very special.

Sharing time with you at diagnosis, offering support and help where I can, and seeing you rise to the challenge of a life changing condition has been very humbling. It has been a privilege to be a part of your journey.

My brief annual insight into the real life with Type 1 Diabetes has been at the Edale weekend when you entrust us with your young people. What a learning curve that is for all the team! You all have my total respect for the efforts and cares you do every day.

My career here has been amazing, sad, challenging, rewarding, fun and I hope that I have helped in some way to make a difference to your experience with diabetes.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of April I will enter a new chapter but I will never forget you and wish you all the best with the exciting times ahead. The world of diabetes has changed beyond recognition since I qualified many years ago. The research and energy being focussed on diabetes will ensure this continues.

I know you will make my successor as welcome as you have made me.

Hoping I will see you in Sheffield at some point! Sheffield is a 'village' after all.

With very best wishes,

Gerry

### **Suggestions for our Microteaching topics**

As many of you will be aware the team have a selection of Microteaching topics which are available for you to look at whilst you wait to see the doctor at your appointments.

The topics we have already covered seem to have been really well received but we now wanted to open it up to you and ask:-

## **Is there anything that you would like a Microteaching Topic to be written about?**

If the answer is 'Yes' then please either email your suggestion to Alison or give her a call and she can put the suggestions to the team.

[a.darby@nhs.net](mailto:a.darby@nhs.net)

0114 2717320

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### **Parent Support Group**

One of our parents has set up a Facebook page where you can connect with others under the care of Sheffield Children's Diabetes Team. If you are not already a member of the group then you need to send a request to join. The parent who runs the groups checks with the team that the person requesting access is legitimate before being accepted.

You can connect with the group at:-

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/399727813545238/>

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### **Clarification re out of hours calls**

When families need to call the hospital for 'out of hours' advice, you should ask to be put through to the senior medical doctor on call.

The senior medical doctor on call has access to a diabetes consultant for advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Families will not be connected directly to the diabetes consultant on call. If you have any issues you can ask the senior medical doctor to speak to the diabetes consultant and to call you back.

You can feedback any comments good or bad to the diabetes nursing office.