

# Diabetes – managing your medication



A summary of the advice provided by Diabetes Physician Dr Rinki Murphy in one of three videos on ‘diabetes management’

## How often should I have my medical plan reviewed?

How often people with diabetes need to see their doctor for their management plan review depends on how many complications they have, and how difficult it is for them to manage their diabetes or their other risk factors. It really needs to be individualised and your GP will be able to guide you on the frequency of this.

## How long does it take to adjust to new medication?

It’s important to discuss any side effects that you may be having with treatments for diabetes, or indeed other risk factors, because there is the possibility that the medications may need to be changed or the dose could be adjusted so it is important not to just put up with side effects.

It is important medications are started gradually and the doses are reduced if people are experiencing side effects. There are alternatives for the medications that are available for diabetes and so it is important to check in with your doctor regularly if you are having any side effects. There may be other options.

## Will all diabetes medications result in weight gain?

Not all diabetes medications help with weight loss. There are a number of medications becoming available internationally that help weight maintenance or indeed weight loss, but many of the agents we have been using can, over time, cause weight gain. This is particularly the case if they are not balanced with what you eat, and if there are side effects such as having low blood sugar levels. Often people are eating to keep up with their diabetes medications, that can be a particular problem.

It is important to work with your doctor or diabetes nurse to make sure that you’re not feeling more hungry just because your blood sugar levels are going too low. Taking steps to have a diet plan and monitoring blood sugar levels will be key to making sure that the doses of the medications you are using are appropriate.

## What happens if I don’t control my blood sugar levels?

The long term implications of poorly controlled diabetes affects the organs that are most sensitive to small blood vessel damage such as the eyes can lead to vision loss and in the case of the kidneys it can lead to kidney failure. In the case of damage to blood vessels supplying the feet, this can affect the nerves and cause numbness, injury, ulceration and infections that are hard to treat and sometimes result in amputations. So those are the long-term complications associated with poorly controlled diabetes.

Damage can be done to those organs gradually, without people realising. Sometimes people can get very unwell when their blood sugar levels get extremely high. So it is wise to do something about monitoring blood sugar levels and take steps to reduce those levels back into the normal range even when people don’t feel unwell.

In people with type 2 diabetes there is often high levels of cholesterol, high levels of blood pressure and a fatty liver. Diseases such as heart disease and stroke risk also increase with type 2 diabetes.

So it is important not only to focus on blood sugar management but get those other factors looked at, monitored and treated by your general practitioner.



Diabetes New Zealand is a leading national organisation and registered charity. Our aim is to support all people affected by diabetes to live well through: Providing information and support to help people take charge of their health • Acting as an advocate and representing all people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially around lifestyle factors that can help prevent or delay type 2 and help manage and control type 1 and type 2.