



Am I getting the education that I need to manage my diabetes?

People with diabetes need effective patient education to enable them to manage their diabetes on a day-to-day basis. You'll be best equipped to do this if you're given information and education when you're diagnosed and then on an ongoing basis to provide you with the knowledge and skills you need.

In 2001, the Department of Health published a National Service Framework for diabetes. The purpose of this was to improve the standards of care for everyone with diabetes. The National Service Framework says that people with diabetes should have information and education to help them self care. "Structured education can improve knowledge, blood glucose control, weight and dietary management, physical activity and psychological well-being, particularly when this is tailored to the needs of the individual and includes skills-based approaches to education".

What is structured patient education?

Structured patient education means that there is a planned course that:

- covers all aspects of diabetes
- is flexible in content
- is relevant to a person's clinical and psychological needs
- is adaptable to a person's educational and cultural background

How do I know if I am receiving good structured education?

The Department of Health together with Diabetes UK set up a group to support good structured education. The group has developed some guidance and published a report so that you can judge whether the education you are getting about your diabetes is of a high standard. If you are not sure, you should ask your diabetes team.

A good planned education course should:

- provide a written outline, so that you can see what will be taught on the course
- be delivered by trained educators – as a minimum the course should be given by someone who understands the principles of patient education and has been assessed as competent to teach the programme
- be quality assured – to make sure it is of a consistently high standard
- provide the opportunity for feedback – to show that it is making a difference to the people who go on it

More details about these criteria are available on the National Diabetes Support Team website at <http://www.cgsupport.nhs.uk/diabetes>

What course should I go on?

You need to go on a course that meets your needs and will support you. Different courses will suit different people, depending on things like what type of diabetes they have, and how long they have had it.

We are currently doing research to find out what types of education are most effective. There are still questions about how long a course should be, or how many sessions it should have. However, some principles of good practice are clear:

- Courses should reflect established methods of adult learning and the curriculum should be clearly written down
- Courses should be run by appropriately trained professionals from a variety of backgrounds (such as nurses and dietitians) to groups of people with diabetes, unless group work is considered unsuitable for an individual
- Sessions should be accessible to the broadest range of people, taking into account the person's culture, ethnicity, any disability they might have and where they live
- Sessions should be held locally, for instance in a community setting or local diabetes centre
- Courses should use a variety of teaching styles to promote active learning, where everyone gets involved and can relate what they are learning to their own experiences
- Courses should be adapted to meet the different needs, personal choices and learning styles of people with diabetes
- Education should become part of your normal diabetes care

Examples of good structured education programmes

There are two national patient education programmes that meet all the key criteria for structured education. They are:

- DAFNE for Type 1
- DESMOND for Type 2

DAFNE – Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating

DAFNE is a skills-based course in which people with type 1 diabetes learn how to adjust their insulin dose to suit what they eat, rather than having to eat to match their insulin doses. More information about DAFNE can be found at www.dafne.uk.com/

DESMOND – Diabetes Education and Self Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed

DESMOND is a new course for people with type 2 diabetes and helps people to identify their own health risks and to set their own specific goals. More information about DESMOND can be found on the project website at www.desmond-project.org.uk

There are also a number of local adult education programmes, many of which are working towards the criteria for structured education. Ask your diabetes team about the adult education programmes they are providing.