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**“The NHS is open” - Diabetes UK urges parents to be**

**4Ts aware during lockdown**

* **A quarter of newly-diagnosed children and young people with type 1 diabetes develop serious DKA before they’re diagnosed**
* **Charity reminds parents to be vigilant, and act if they’re worried**

Diabetes UK is today [14th April 2020] urging parents not to let coronavirus fears stop them from seeking medical help if they’re worried their child is showing the signs and symptoms of type 1 diabetes.

Echoing comments made on Wednesday (8th April) by Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England that the public should – as they always have done – seek emergency care if they need it, the charity is reminding parents of the 4Ts of type 1 diabetes, and reassuring them that if they need urgent help – the NHS is open.

Type 1 diabetes is the most common form in children and young people. But new research from Diabetes UK has found that almost a quarter (23%) of all newly diagnosed children and young people with type 1 diabetes in England and Wales were not formally diagnosed until they had become seriously ill with diabetic ketoacidosis, or DKA.

DKA is life threatening but, in most cases, preventable. Acting quickly can save lives, so Diabetes UK wants to raise awareness of the common early symptoms of type 1 diabetes, so that children are diagnosed sooner and more safely.

The early signs and symptoms are easy to mistake for a viral infection or other illness, which is why it’s so important to be 4T aware.

What are the 4Ts?

* Toilet - Going to the toilet a lot, bed wetting by a previously dry child or heavier nappies in babies
* Thirsty - Being really thirsty and not being able to quench the thirst
* Tired - Feeling more tired than usual
* Thinner - Losing weight or looking thinner than usual

These symptoms of type 1 diabetes are also the most common symptoms in adults, who should equally be type 1 aware, and other symptoms can include infections such as thrush, or blurred vision.

The symptoms of type 1 diabetes come on very quickly – over a few days or weeks – and need urgent treatment. Without treatment, consistently high blood sugar levels can lead to DKA. DKA can often be treated with insulin and fluids if it is picked up quickly. But the life threatening complication could be prevented entirely if the signs of type 1 diabetes are spotted early.

Diabetes UK’s analysis is based on the National Paediatric Diabetes Audit Hospital admissions and complications reports 2012-2015 (2017). These reports show that each year around 600 children and young people received a type 1 diabetes diagnosis only after they developed DKA – a medical emergency which must be treated in hospital quickly.

While the UK is under lockdown, Diabetes UK has also been hearing anecdotally from clinicians that disproportionate numbers of young people are arriving for urgent care already in DKA, further highlighting the need for people to act, and fast, if they suspect type 1 diabetes.

**Dan Howarth is Head of Care at Diabetes UK. He said:**

“We know that parents currently have a million things on their mind, and they’re doing everything they can to keep themselves and their families safe during the coronavirus outbreak.

“But diabetic ketoacidosis can be a life-threatening complication of diabetes. If a child or young person does not receive immediate treatment for DKA, it can lead to coma, or even death.

“It is vital that parents are aware of the early signs of type 1 diabetes and seek help if they need it. The NHS is open, and the health service is still there for you. The quicker children are diagnosed the less likely they are to become seriously ill. If you spot the signs, please call 999.”

Information about the signs and symptoms of all types of diabetes can be found here: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-the-basics/diabetes-symptoms>

Find out more about DKA and what you can do to avoid it here: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/diabetic_ketoacidosis>

Diabetes UK has also prepared up-to-date guidance to support anyone living with or affected by diabetes during the coronavirus epidemic, which can be found at: [www.diabetes.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/coronavirus)

**– ENDS –**

**Spokespeople and case studies are available for interview upon request.**

\*\*\*Following recommendation from the NPDA we have used the National Paediatric Diabetes Audit Hospital admissions and complications reports 2011-2015 (published in July 2017) instead of the most recent audit due to data completeness and quality issues with incomplete submission of admission data by participating PDUs in the 2017/18 audit.

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/national-paediatric-diabetes-audit-hospital-admissions-complications-reports-2011-2015>

**Media enquiries:**

For further media information please contact Diabetes UK’s media relations team on 020 7424 1165 or email [pressteam@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:pressteam@diabetes.org.uk). For urgent out of hours media enquiries only please call 077 111 76028.

**Notes to editors:**

1.   Diabetes UK’s aim is creating a world where diabetes can do no harm. Diabetes is the most devastating and fastest growing health crisis of our time, affecting more people than any other serious health condition in the UK - more than dementia and cancer combined. There is currently no known cure for any type of diabetes. With the right treatment, knowledge and support people living with diabetes can lead a long, full and healthy life. For more information about diabetes and the charity’s work, visit [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

2.   Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because the body cannot use it properly. If not managed well, both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can lead to devastating complications. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of preventable sight loss in people of working age in the UK and is a major cause of lower limb amputation, kidney failure and stroke.

3.   People with **type 1 diabetes** cannot produce insulin. About 8 per cent of people with diabetes have type 1. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it’s not to do with being overweight and it isn’t currently preventable. It’s the most common type of diabetes in children and young adults, starting suddenly and getting worse quickly. Type 1 diabetes is treated by daily insulin doses – taken either by injections or via an insulin pump. It is also recommended to follow a healthy diet and take regular physical activity.

4.   People with **type 2 diabetes** don’t produce enough insulin or the insulin they produce doesn’t work properly (known as insulin resistance). Around 90 per cent of people with diabetes have type 2. They might get type 2 diabetes because of their family history, age and ethnic background puts them at increased risk. They are also more likely to get type 2 diabetes if they are overweight. It starts gradually, usually later in life, and it can be years before they realise they have it. Type 2 diabetes is treated with a healthy diet and increased physical activity. In addition, tablets and/or insulin can be required.

5.   About 2 per cent of people have **other types of diabetes**. Other types include 11 different forms of monogenic diabetes, cystic fibrosis related diabetes and diabetes caused by rare syndromes. Certain medication such as steroids and antipsychotics, surgery or hormonal imbalances could also lead to other types of diabetes.

For more information on reporting on diabetes, download our journalists’ guide: [Diabetes in the News: A Guide for Journalists on Reporting on Diabetes](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/resources-s3/2018-08/A%20guide%20to%20reporting%20diabetes%20news_Diabetes%20UK_2018_1127.pdf) (PDF, 3MB).