

## Guidance for GPs and Practice Nurses Looking after people with diabetes in Oxfordshire during and after Covid-19

We want to update you on the local and national guidance about looking after people with diabetes mellitus as we enter the next phase of recovery from Covid. There are a number of **useful websites** which give advice both to patients and to healthcare professionals. These include:

- Diabetes UK: [https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about\\_us/news/coronavirus](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/coronavirus) (T1 & T2 Diabetes)
- OUH Diabetes website: <https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/services/departments/specialist-medicine/diabetes/default.aspx> (T1 & T2 Diabetes)
- Association British Clinical Diabetologists: <https://abcd.care/coronavirus> (T1 and T2 Diabetes)
- UK Diabetes Specialist Nurses advice for people with type 2 diabetes who are ill: [https://trend-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A5\\_T2Illness\\_TREND\\_FINAL.pdf](https://trend-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A5_T2Illness_TREND_FINAL.pdf) (T2 Diabetes)

Training for HCPs about diabetes and Covid has been provided by the European Association for the Study Diabetes <https://easd-elearning.org/covid-19/>

People with diabetes **do not appear to be at increased risk of infection** with COVID-19. However, people with diabetes who are infected have a higher mortality rate compared to those without diabetes.

[Type 1 Diabetes in People Hospitalized for COVID-19: New Insights From the CORONADO Study | Diabetes Care \(diabetesjournals.org\)](https://diabetesjournals.org/coronado)

Modifiable risk factors associated with better outcomes are lower HbA1cs and lower BMIs. We do not know whether improving these risk factors improves outcomes from Covid infection, but general advice is that these should be improved if possible.

Infection with Covid is associated with an increased risk of ketosis and ketoacidosis for people with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. As such, please be vigilant and have a low threshold for checking blood ketones.

Covid vaccination can be associated with a temporary low-grade fever (<37.6C), muscle aches and tiredness, which can be managed with prophylactic paracetamol. Temporary high blood sugars may also result.

## What needs to be done?

We recognise that there are key concerns including:

- Which people with diabetes should I prioritise?
- Where can they have their blood tests and urine tests done?
- How can I get advice quickly on managing people with diabetes?
- What about foot checks?

We would encourage you to **prioritise**:

- People who have poor glycaemic control
- People have been recently discharged from hospital for any reason
- People whose medication has been recently changed.
- People with active diabetic foot disease.

It would be reasonable in the current circumstances, to defer routine diabetes appointments e.g.

- people who are well controlled who need annual review
- people who have no current clinical need for medication adjustment

It would be helpful to keep a record of everyone who has had their appointments deferred so that they can have their tests at a later date however this will depend on how long this situation lasts.

## Existing services

The **Community Diabetes Service email advice line** ([diabetesdialogue@nhs.net](mailto:diabetesdialogue@nhs.net)) and the Community Diabetes Specialist Nurse office (01869 604089) remain open for advice about patients with Type 2 diabetes (Mon-Friday 0900-1700).

The existing helpline for people with diabetes for emergency queries remains active – **01865 857357** (0800-1600, 7 days a week). There is also an email available for non-urgent queries from people with diabetes ([dsnop.ocdem@nhs.net](mailto:dsnop.ocdem@nhs.net)) which is staffed Mon-Fri, 0800-1600.

The **OCDEM email advice line** remains open for **healthcare professionals** ([oxon.diabetes\\_lipids@nhs.net](mailto:oxon.diabetes_lipids@nhs.net)). Out of hours queries should be directed to the Diabetes SpR on call through OUH Switchboard.

The **OCDEM foot clinic** continues to accept referrals ([diabeticfootclinic.ouh@nhs.net](mailto:diabeticfootclinic.ouh@nhs.net)). Care for people with active foot disease will continue as normal with regular Diabetes Foot MDT clinics.

As of Jan 2021, OCDEM Diabetes Nurses are offering only urgent diabetes advice in line with clinical need.

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Clearly we would only be able to offer foot examinations, injection site examinations, BP or BMI to people who attend in person.

OCDEM and the Community Diabetes Service (CDS) are accepting new referrals via usual methods. CDS are also offering virtual clinics (phone or MS TEAMS) in the first instance and only if clinical need dictates, face to face appointments at home.

**Blood tests:** Limited phlebotomy services are available at the Churchill Hospital for patients who have had a hospital request form completed. Blood and ketone meters can be prescribed in primary care as usual; a limited supply is available in OCDEM (contact the helpline beforehand).

### Community Podiatry Services

All 15 Community Podiatry clinics are **OPEN** and appointments are NOT being cancelled (unless there is staff sickness that cannot be covered). All patients are asked to attend their planned Podiatry appointments.

There is a contingency plan in place should staff sickness levels pose a problem to maintaining service delivery which will include:

- Not over booking clinics too far in advance - to maintain appointment capacity where it is needed
- Pausing assessment of non-urgent NEW patient referrals. NB URGENT referrals will still be seen - ensure they are emailed to [Podiatry@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:Podiatry@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)
- Pausing Nail Surgery new patient assessments and non-urgent surgical procedures
- Implementing more digital/virtual and telephone consultations where necessary
- Directing patients to our website for advice: [Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust Foot health | Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust](#)

The above measures will ensure we can continue to see/treat/advise our highest risk and ulcerated patients.

The **antenatal diabetes service** will continue to operate as normal. Please continue to ensure that patients are referred promptly to [diabetes.midwives@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:diabetes.midwives@ouh.nhs.uk) or on 01865 251039.

The Oxfordshire Diabetes **Eye Screening** Programme has started to screen patients again. However, patients will be called for screening based on risk as identified by PHE. Patients at low risk of progression of eye disease will have planned eye

photographs deferred. In the meantime, **if patients experience a change in their vision they are advised to contact the Oxfordshire Diabetes Eye Screening Programme (01865 231586) or their local optometrist.**

**Group education sessions** for people with Type 1 diabetes (DAFNE) are continuing as virtual training sessions. Group education for people with Type 2 diabetes (Diabetes2gether and Diabetes4ward) has stopped until end of March 2021, to release Diabetes Specialist Nurse resource. We are delivering Freestyle Libre starts and Weightwise through online education and telephone support.

Online resources also include BERTIE Online for Type 1 diabetes (<https://www.bertieonline.org.uk/>), and mytype1diabetes for T1 diabetes [www.mytype1diabetes.nhs.uk](http://www.mytype1diabetes.nhs.uk) and Diabetes UK for Type 2 diabetes (<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/education#online>).

If you have any concerns about the service or about how to manage individual patients, please do not hesitate to contact us. We appreciate all the work that you are doing at this very difficult time and want to work with you to provide the very best care possible for our patients.