

# A Picture of Health

## In focus this month: Type 2 Diabetes

In Public Health we look at the way people in Tameside live as a whole population. This helps us understand what the main health and wellbeing challenges are for people living here, so we can look for ways to improve levels of health. We'll be sharing facts and figures about health in Tameside with you every month, to put you in the picture. We'll also be giving you information on how you can help yourself and the people around you to live well.

**1 We don't have a crystal ball here in Public Health, but we can tell the future.**  
We know that certain lifestyles lead to certain diseases. We also know who is most likely to develop them in years to come. It's a case of weighing up the things that we do that put us at risk, coupled with the things in our genes that might make us more likely to get sick than someone else, even if we live a similar lifestyle. The good news is that many diseases are avoidable, so by knowing what the future holds, we can change it. It's a fact that many people in Tameside get sick when they don't have to. Type 2 Diabetes is just one of the conditions that people here don't have to get, because it's caused by lifestyle choices that can be changed. Have a glimpse at your future here. Take this short quiz to see if you could be at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, and read on to find out how you can dodge the disease.

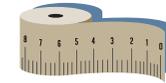
**2 For many people the term Diabetes is quite familiar, and might even be something they learnt about in school.**  
It probably conjures up thoughts of insulin, lessons about the pancreas, or if you were really paying attention, the islets of the Langerhans! If you're a little rusty on your school biology here's a much easier guide to remind you what diabetes is, and how it affects the way our bodies function.



**3 Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90% of cases in the UK.**  
Around 12,000 people in Tameside have it, and that number is rising, but why? Average waist sizes in the UK have grown by around an inch per decade since World War 2. Sitting still for long periods, and an excess of processed foods that are high in fat and sugar mean we are gradually becoming an overweight nation. Carrying excess weight increases your chance of developing Type 2 diabetes, so it stands to reason; more overweight people, more diabetes. Maintaining a healthy weight is your best protection against the disease. Take a look through this short workbook to see how you could make a start on your weight loss journey today.



**4 So much of your health is in your hands, and you have the power to up your chances of staying well for longer.** If your waist is 37\* inches or more for a man, or 31.5 inches for a woman (\*35 inches for men of South Asian descent) you are at increased risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes. By making a small improvement in diet and losing a little weight, you can reduce that risk back down. But don't delay. Type 2 diabetes makes a big change to your body, and although good habits can minimise the effects of the disease, prevention is always the best course of action. If you're just on the cusp of developing diabetes, sometimes called being 'pre-diabetic', there's still a chance that making positive changes now could prevent you having to take medication for a lifetime. Find out about pre-diabetes here.



**5 Diabetes is treatable, so why is it so important to avoid it getting it?**  
Whilst treatment is effective, it's a lifelong necessity. The condition also increases the chance of developing other problems such as heart and kidney disease, having a stroke, losing your sight, and even developing ulcers that can lead to amputation of limbs. At worst these complications could shorten your life, at best they're unpleasant, painful or simply inconvenient. If you've already been diagnosed it's even more important to maintain a healthy weight, drink sensibly, and not to smoke, because living a healthier lifestyle can reduce the chances of developing these additional complications. Watch the video to learn more about the other health problems associated with diabetes.



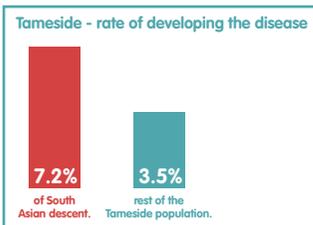
**6 If you have a diagnosis of diabetes, exercising regularly will help protect you against the additional complications it can cause.**  
The Live Active programme, specifically designed for people with long term conditions, is ideal for those who are managing diabetes. It helps address the underlying causes like being overweight, as well as helping with the additional complications like heart disease. Visit the Live Active website to find out how you can get support from the programme.



**7 If you already have Type 2 diabetes, alcohol will have a big effect on your blood sugar levels.**  
It doesn't mean you can't have a drink, but it's important to follow sensible guidelines, like not drinking on an empty stomach, and eating a starchy snack before bedtime. A diabetic person who is drinking alcohol can experience big drops in blood sugar, which can be dangerous. When this happens they may slur their words, act strange, or become confused or irritable. It's easy to mistake this for being drunk, so it's important to be able to tell the difference. If you have a diabetic friend, learn how to spot the signs of low blood sugar (Hypoglycaemia). If you are diabetic yourself make sure one of your pals knows to keep an eye on you. Watch the video for tips on what to do if you or your friend is having a hypo when you're out on the town.



**8 People from certain ethnic groups are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than others due to differences in their biological make up.**  
People of South Asian descent are much more likely to develop the disease, at a rate of 7.2% compared to 3.5% for the rest of the population. In Tameside, around 15,000 people are of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi descent. If that's you, you need to take greater care with your health than others if you want to avoid diabetes. For more advice on diabetes in different languages click below.



**9 Smoking.**  
No matter what the topic for Picture of Health we'll always say quitting is the best thing you can do for your health. For diabetic people this message is even more important, but why? Amongst a list of other complications, diabetes increases the risk of developing heart disease and of having a stroke. Smoking increases those risks too. So a diabetic person who also smokes is taking a double gamble with their health. Click below to understand why, and never quit trying to quit. There's always help. Just call **0161 716 2000** to speak to an advisor.



**10 Gestational diabetes is a type that occurs in pregnant women, and is quite common.**  
Around 18 in every 100 women in the UK get it. It usually disappears after the baby arrives, but in some cases it can mean that mum is at higher risk of developing the irreversible Type 2 diabetes in later life. If this type of diabetes isn't managed properly it can have implications for the baby, such as being overly large, being premature, or even being stillborn. Thankfully this is rare. GPs and Midwives test for gestational diabetes, and are on hand for mums to provide good advice to protect themselves and their baby. Again, maintaining a healthy weight pre-pregnancy and gaining at the recommended rate during pregnancy is the best protection. Watch the video for more information, and if you are pregnant, ask your midwife for advice.

