

## Patient information

# Psychology and Diabetes

## Why include psychology as part of the diabetes service?

The government and NHS England are beginning to integrate treatment of physical and mental health. They recognise that living with any chronic health condition can impact mental health and experiencing mental illness can impact physical health.



Diabetes UK confirms those links between physical and mental health: *“diabetes doesn’t just affect someone physically. The effect of varying blood sugar levels on mood – and the relentless need to manage the condition – affects mental health”.* (2017)

People who have diabetes are likely to have a higher need for emotional and psychological support because of the demands of managing the condition. Having that support can make it easier for people to manage diabetes, leading to a better quality of life and limiting the development of any potential medical complications commonly found in diabetes.

## How might seeing the psychologist help you?

Talking to the psychologist about living with diabetes might help you feel supported in:

- Dealing with the shock and distress of a new diagnosis of diabetes or fear of potential medical complications in future.
- Coming to terms with diabetes, the loss of perfect health and medical

intervention.

- Minimising things getting in the way of you managing diabetes and sticking to the medical advice given to you.
- Dealing with and reducing hospital admissions.
- Finding different ways of coping with your condition or other challenges in life.
- Handling other health problems that interfere with your diabetes control.
- Expressing your feelings about how diabetes affects your life, in terms of independence, employment, relationships, friendships, travel, freedom, enjoyment, safety.
- Regaining a sense of control in your life and the ability to make healthier choices.
- Finding compassion for yourself and your body and improving self-care.

## **What happens when you see the psychologist?**

Your first appointment with the psychologist is likely to last between 60 and 90 minutes and you will be asked for your consent to the sharing of information with other care providers such as your G.P. The psychologist will ask a number of questions to get a clearer idea of how diabetes is impacting you and seeing it within the wider context of your life. It will be a chance for you to explore your feelings about having diabetes, your ability to manage the condition and the things that are important to you going forwards.

You and the psychologist will agree on what might happen after that first appointment. This may include one of the following:

- No further psychological input to be scheduled at that time.
- Sign-posting or referral towards other appropriate support services.
- Joining a psychology group for people with diabetes.
- Follow-on individual appointments with the psychologist lasting 45 minutes.

After your appointment the psychologist will write to your GP and send you a copy of the letter as a record of what you talked about. This will include the difficulties you are experiencing and what can be offered by the psychologist to try and help.

## How do I arrange to see the psychologist?

Ask any member of the diabetes team (doctor, nurse, dietician, podiatrist) when you come to clinic or make contact with them. Then a member of the team will write to you offering you an appointment or call you to discuss your options.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website [www.wsh.nhs.uk](http://www.wsh.nhs.uk) and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:*

*<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>*

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