

3.17 Care of People with Metabolic Problems - Type 2 Diabetes mellitus

Mark aged 45, has a BMI of 35 and has recently been diagnosed with type II diabetes.

Provide: You've recently been told that you have developed diabetes and you want to discuss what changes you can make to your lifestyle to improve your health.

Elicit: What do you understand about diabetes?

Mark: I don't really know much other than it's something to do with your sugar levels.

Provide: Diabetes is a condition in which the body can't handle sugar effectively. Normally when you eat sugary foods the body releases a hormone called insulin to try to bring down the sugar level in the blood. This is because the body does not respond well to an abnormally high or low sugar level.

Elicit: Does that make sense so far?

Mark: Yes.

Provide: But in diabetes, either the body cannot make enough insulin or the insulin it makes does not work well enough. So sugar levels can often become very high. This can make you feel unwell, and in the long term can harm your vital organs.

Elicit: Still with me?

Mark: Yes

Provide: One way you can help yourself if through changing your diet. Some foods release sugars into the blood stream slowly - we call these low glycaemic index foods (low GI). In diabetes, eating more of these can help lower your blood sugars. Low GI foods release sugar gradually, so your sugar level is more stable. Also you are less likely to be hungry after a meal if you eat low GI foods. Foods in the low GI group include oats (porridge), beans, peas, nuts, pasta and low GI breads (for example rye bread). Eating these foods can also reduce your cholesterol level. It is important to keep your diet balanced. Plenty of fruit, vegetables and fibre will help to keep you healthy, and together with regular exercise, can help you lose weight.

Elicit: How does all of that sound? Can you explain to me what you've understood today?

Mark: I understand what diabetes is now and why I need to control my sugar levels. And I need to eat low GI foods to help with this and to exercise and lose weight.

Elicit: I will give you a leaflet with more information to have a read of and we'll see you back in 3 months for a blood test to see if things have improved. Is there anything else you want to ask?

Mark: No thanks that's everything.