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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Management of your diabetes whilst you are in hospital (1 of 4)

We would like to work with you as much as we can to make the management of your diabetes as easy as possible for you while you are in hospital. The diabetes specialist team support the nursing and other ward staff in helping to look after your diabetes. We hope that this leaflet will help answer some questions that you may have – if anything is not answered here then please do ask any member of the ward staff. They may be able to help you and, if not, will contact the diabetes team.

Will my diabetes treatment change when I come into hospital?

.....If I have been admitted with a hypo?

If you have been admitted to hospital with a low blood sugar, we will try to work out with you why this has happened. We may then advise a change in treatment to reduce the chance of it happening again.

.....If my blood sugars are high?

When people are unwell their blood sugar often rises quite a lot. This might mean that your diabetes treatment needs to be changed soon after you arrive in hospital. If you are on tablets these may need to be increased and sometimes we will suggest a change to insulin therapy. Some changes in treatment will only be temporary but sometimes we will recommend continuing the new treatment whilst you are in hospital and when you go home. We will support you with this and you will be given all the information you need about any changes in treatment so you can continue with this when you go home and perhaps start managing it yourself while you are in hospital. This support is particularly important if you have changed from tablets to insulin. The diabetes specialist nurse will spend as much time with you as you need to learn about giving insulin and checking your blood sugar if you have not done this before. Sometimes people need ongoing support at home with giving insulin. If this is the case it will be arranged before you go home. If your treatment has been changed and you have any concerns then please ask any member of the team so that we can help sort them out.

I have been put on an insulin drip – why and what will happen now?

When you first come into hospital the doctors may suggest that your diabetes is managed temporarily with an insulin drip. This is usually if

Diabetes Nursing Team
01722 425176

you are unwell with high blood sugars, are not eating and drinking or are being sick. An insulin drip is always used to start with in people with type 1 diabetes who are admitted with diabetic ketoacidosis. If you have been put on an insulin drip, your sugar will need to be checked frequently, and to start with usually every hour until the sugar is back under control. We will leave you on the insulin drip if you have needed this for as short a time as possible. We would usually stop once you are eating and drinking. When coming off the drip you may return to your usual diabetes treatment or we may recommend a change in treatment. All this will be discussed with you.

Can I continue to look after my diabetes in hospital?

Yes

We encourage you to continue to look after your diabetes as much as you feel able.

If you are on insulin the nurses will check that you have all the things that you need and will make sure that all your equipment is working okay. They will check that your meter is reading accurately and will also go through insulin injections with you to make sure that you are not having any difficulties with this. If this is all okay, then we are happy for you to continue to look after your diabetes as you would do at home. We usually ask you to monitor the blood sugar before each meal and at bed time while you are in hospital. If you are monitoring yourself the nurses will ask you the readings and then put them on to your diabetes prescription chart. We can then help you adjust your insulin doses to get the blood sugars as good as possible. If you are used to adjusting your insulin doses with each meal depending on what you are eating it is fine to continue to do this – we will just ask you to jot down what dose you have given.

If you are on tablets, the nurses will check that you are happy when to take these and will also check your blood glucose meter, if you have one, to make sure you are happy and confident with the way that it works. If you have not monitored your blood sugar before, the nurses will do this for you for the first day or two in hospital to make sure that your diabetes is okay. If the blood sugar readings are high, the doctors looking after you may change your treatment to lower the sugar. This will all be discussed with you.

If your treatment has changed in hospital it is fine to start self-managing the new treatment if you are confident and able to do this.

If you are feeling poorly you may find giving your insulin or tablets and monitoring your blood sugars is more difficult than usual. If this is the case, the nurses will do this for you. As you get better you can start looking after your diabetes again yourself if you wish.

If you are going to continue with your diabetes treatment whilst you are in hospital the nurses will ask you to sign a form to say that you are happy to do that.

Do I have to look after my diabetes myself whilst I am in hospital?

No

Although we encourage people to look after their diabetes as much as possible, sometimes people do not feel up to doing this when they are unwell. The nurses will talk to you about

whether you feel able to continue to look after your diabetes and if you don't then that is fine. The staff on the ward will then monitor your sugars for you and also give you your insulin/tablets.

If during your stay you do feel able to start looking after your diabetes then please discuss this with the nursing staff.

If the ward staff have taken over giving you your insulin/tablets it is just as important that these are given at the same time as at home. If you are at all concerned that any of your treatment is being given at a different time please discuss this with the staff.

What about the meals – are these suitable for people with diabetes?

For each meal you will be given a menu card. Anything which has a 'd' next to it is suitable for people with diabetes and we encourage you to choose these. If, when you get your menu card, you are not sure what to do and which choices might be suitable, then please ask the staff on the ward and they will help you.

If you are used to adjusting your insulin doses and eating what you like, then we are happy for you to make other food choices. We will ask you to make a note of what you have eaten and how much insulin you have had, along with the checks of your blood sugars. This will help us advise about any changes to make if the sugars are not in the target range.

I am worried about having a hypo whilst I am in hospital

Many things change when people come into hospital. If you are unwell in bed, you will be less mobile than normal, your diet will be different from home and your appetite may be less than normal. All these changes will mean that your diabetes control is likely to be different in hospital than it is at home. All the team are very aware of this and we will adjust your treatment with you to try and keep your diabetes on track. If you feel low at any time, or, if you are monitoring yourself and notice a blood sugar below 4, please tell the staff immediately. On all wards there is a special 'Hypo-Box'. This has everything in for managing an episode of low blood sugar and the staff will be able to do this with you.

An important part of managing a low blood sugar is to have a long acting carbohydrate-rich snack (such as one or two slices of bread or 2-3 biscuits) and you should be offered this after the low blood sugar has been treated. If you aren't, please ask the ward staff.

If you have had a low sugar it is important that your diabetes treatment is looked at and changed if necessary, to reduce the chance of it happening again.

The protocol we use to manage low blood sugar is on the back of your diabetes drug chart – please feel free to have a look at this so you are familiar with what to expect if your blood sugar does go low.

Feet checks

Everybody with diabetes should have their feet looked at soon after arriving in hospital, to make sure that there are not any problems – if this has not happened in the first 12 hours, please do ask a member of staff. It is particularly important for this to be done if you have had any problems with your feet in the past and if this is the case please make sure the team looking after you know about it.

My treatment has changed – what will happen when I go home?

We will make sure that you have everything that you need to continue managing your diabetes when you get home. A letter will be sent to your GP outlining all the treatment you are going home on, so that he or she can change your repeat prescription at the surgery. If you need some help at home with managing your diabetes then we will arrange this.

After you get home, if you have any queries about looking after your diabetes then you can either contact your GP surgery or the diabetes nursing team here at the hospital on 01722 425176 where there is an answer phone message. If you give your name, leave a contact number and say that you have recently been in hospital then the in-patient diabetes nurse or one of the other diabetes nurses will ring you back and make every effort to help you.