WHAT HAPPENS AT A DIABETIC CLINIC?

Most people with Type 1 diabetes attend a hospital diabetes clinic; people with Type 2 diabetes may attend either the hospital or their GP diabetes clinic or both. Both hospital and GP diabetes clinics are able to provide all your routine diabetes care and annual review. So what happens at a diabetes clinic? Read on to find out: -

**Physical Examination**

1. **Height and Weight:** Your weight is often calculated as Body Mass Index (BMI), which expresses your adult weight in relation to your height. Your BMI should be between 20 and 25.
2. **Blood pressure** should be taken at every diabetic clinic visit. A normal blood pressure is considered to be 120 / 80 mmHg. You will be advised on an appropriate target for your particular situation.
3. **Foot examination:** This is done every year and checks the skin, the sensation and that the blood supply is satisfactory. Please wear shoes and socks that allow easy access to your feet.
4. **Eye examination:** This is done every year by Digital Retinal Photography. This is usually carried out by an accredited high street optician, but it can also be done in the hospital diabetic clinic
   - **Looking at a reading chart.** You will need to bring your reading glasses with you for this.
   - **Having eye drops inserted** to make your pupils bigger. The drops may sting at first and cause blurring of vision for up to 2 hours (it is best not to bring your car as your sight can be altered, making it unsafe to drive until the drops have worn off).
5. **Injection site examination** if you are on insulin.

**Laboratory Tests and Investigations**

1. **Blood samples** are taken and tested for:
   - **Haemoglobin A1c (HbA1c):** This is done at every visit and tells how well controlled your diabetes has been over the previous 3 months. (Please see the leaflet *HbA1c – What does it mean?*).
   - **Creatinine and eGFR:** This is checked yearly and tells how well your kidneys are working
   - **Lipid profile:** This is checked yearly, or more often if you are on cholesterol-lowering tablets. If cholesterol-only is being checked the sample can be taken non-fasting. If your triglycerides are being checked the sample must be taken first thing in the morning after an overnight fast. (Please see the leaflet *High cholesterol – What does it mean?*).
Liver Function tests: these are checked periodically, particularly to ensure medication is not upsetting the liver and to look for evidence of fat deposition in the liver - which is frequently associated with diabetes and obesity.

Thyroid function tests: to look for evidence of an underactive thyroid gland – frequently present in diabetes and commoner in women.


You will be asked to provide a specimen of urine collected first thing in the morning into a sterile container. This is tested for small amounts of protein (called microalbumin), which, in the normal course of events, is not present in the urine.

Increased levels of microalbumin in the urine are associated with a higher risk of developing some of the complications of diabetes. It is important to detect the presence of microalbumin because it can often be removed with medication.

It may be better to have your blood and urine tests done before your next clinic visit so that the results are available when you meet the doctor or nurse. This will allow the findings to be discussed and a management plan to be decided there and then. You will be provided with the appropriate forms at your preceding clinic visit.

You may need to see one or more members of the diabetes team during the visit depending issues identified:

1. Diabetes Specialist Nurse
2. Doctor
3. Dietitian
4. Podiatrist

Lifestyle Issues

Every year you should have enough time to discuss in the diabetic clinic:

- Your general well-being, including how you cope with your diabetes
- Your current treatment
- Your diabetes control, including home monitoring results and problems with hypo’s.
- Any problems you may be having

Discussion should include, where relevant, issues such as smoking, alcohol consumption, sexual problems, stress/anxiety and physical exercise. You should feel free to raise any or all of these issues with your diabetes care team.

The diabetes clinic visit therefore involves many assessments and will take some time to complete in order to assess your diabetes properly. Please therefore allow yourself plenty of time for your diabetes clinic visit.