

Diabetes

According to the health profile of Hertfordshire produced by Public Health England on 2 June 2015 there are 50,047 people recorded with diabetes. However there are a number of people in Hertfordshire living with pre diabetes and undiagnosed diabetes. There are 250 community pharmacies in Hertfordshire. Because of their convenient access to the public without a need for an appointment, community pharmacies are likely to encounter visitors with undiagnosed diabetes who rarely access GP services. People may present in the pharmacy with symptoms relating to diabetes such as:

- recurrent thrush
- cystitis
- increased thirst
- tiredness
- increased need to urinate particularly at night
- wounds that heal slowly

Community pharmacy teams can identify individuals at risk of developing diabetes and appropriately intervene and refer patients to the GP and other health professionals. Many community pharmacies also offer blood glucose testing and some community pharmacies offer a free diabetes screening test. Community pharmacists have a significant role to play in the prevention, identification and management of diabetes.

Supporting patients living with diabetes

The New Medicine Service (NMS) provides support for people with long-term conditions newly prescribed a medicine to help improve medicines adherence. This service is targeted at particular patient groups including diabetes. Pharmacists can help influence the effective use of medication and suggest resolutions to medication related issues. Pharmacists play a vital role in educating patients on lifestyle modification strategies. This is particularly important in diabetes in which there is a risk of complications to eyes, heart, kidneys, nerves and feet. Lifestyle changes such as physical activity, weight loss and dietary changes can help to reduce the chance of diabetic complications. Community pharmacists and their teams can proactively encourage patients to self-manage their long term conditions reducing the strain on the NHS and integrating community pharmacy into the care pathway for diabetes.

Pharmacist led diabetes support service

A local community pharmacy group in Hertfordshire undertook a Randomised Controlled Study to provide a pharmaceutical care package on diabetes parameters and cardiovascular risk factors in the community setting. Diabetes with its complications, prevalence and increasing rate poses a risk to public health. Management of diabetes can be difficult. It is a complex disease requiring constant monitoring and concordance. Traditionally, in type 2 diabetes, GPs have prescribed and pharmacists have dispensed. Pharmacists have now become more involved in the clinical care of patients, with medication reviews, counselling and more recently as supplementary and independent prescribers. Through the study the pharmacist provided comprehensive education and counselling on lifestyle issues, a medicines use review if needed and referral to other healthcare professionals if necessary. The results indicated that the pharmaceutical care package could result in favourable improvements in diabetes parameters and cardiovascular risk profile of patients with type 2 diabetes.



Local examples of a pharmacist supporting diabetes care

"My pharmacy offers a free diabetes screening test to determine if patients are at risk of developing diabetes. Diabetes is dependent on a number of risk factors including obesity, family history and age. Our screening test allows us to identify patients at high risk of developing diabetes. Having a diabetes screening test in a community pharmacy setting improves access to the service and help to educate patients on their risk of developing diabetes" Zahra, *Lloyds Pharmacy, Royston*