



DIABETES, SEX AND YOU



No one wants to think about anything other than a healthy, happy sex life – and most likely that is what you will enjoy but it pays to be informed just in case any problems crop up.

This leaflet provides information on two areas where diabetes and sex can affect your overall wellbeing: sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and erectile dysfunction (ED).

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and BBVs (viruses that are transmitted from the blood of one person to the blood of another) can be passed on by sexual contact. This includes vaginal, oral and anal sex, as well as genital touching and skin-to-skin contact.

Anyone can have an STI or BBV without realising it because often there are no obvious symptoms.

Unprotected sexual contact puts you at risk of contracting an STI. The more partners you have, the greater the risk. As with all infections, STIs can potentially increase BGLs (blood glucose levels).

If you have unexplained above target BGLs and think you might have an STI speak to your doctor as

soon as possible. Most STIs are quickly and easily treated without too much fuss.

Only barrier contraception, such as the condom, **when used properly**, can prevent you from catching an STI **as well as decrease the risk of unplanned pregnancy in your partner.**

It's a good idea to discuss contraceptive choices with your partner. Using both barrier methods and, if appropriate, hormonal contraception (such as the oral pill or implants) provides optimum protection and peace of mind for you and your partner.

Some of the possible STI symptoms to be aware of include:

- ✘ pain when urinating
- ✘ swollen testicles
- ✘ feeling lethargic
- ✘ muscle and joint pain
- ✘ penile discharge
- ✘ loss of appetite
- ✘ low-grade fever
- ✘ nausea

Find out more about STIs from Family Planning Victoria
fpv.org.au

ANYONE CAN HAVE AN STI WITHOUT REALISING IT.



CAN'T GET IT UP? LET'S TALK.

Erectile dysfunction

There is a link between diabetes and erectile dysfunction (ED) – a condition that affects your ability to get and keep an erection (sometimes called impotence). Diabetes, and in particular prolonged high BGLs, can affect the blood supply to the penis and the nerves that control erections.

Often men with diabetes who have experienced ED also have other complications related to nerve damage or blood circulation problems, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol or heart disease. ED can be temporarily caused by many factors like being tired, stressed, and depressed or drinking too

much alcohol. Some medications may also cause ED, such as medications for high blood pressure, depression or stomach ulcers. Being worried or self-conscious about your performance, or fear of a hypoglycaemic episode during sex, can also contribute to ED.

If you notice any change in your ability to have an erection it's a good idea to talk to your doctor or diabetes care team as soon as possible. It's a sensitive subject, but try to be open and honest about what's happening – you're not alone. Your doctor or diabetes nurse educator will be able to

discuss the possible causes and best treatment options for you. Keeping BGLs in target will help to reduce the chance of ED.

Both men and women with diabetes may also lose their sex drive when their BGLs are above target. At the other end of the scale, low blood glucose can cause ED. Because sexual intercourse is physical exercise, it's worth watching out for signs of hypoglycaemia (such as feeling weak, dizzy or shaky) after sex. That's why regular checking and trying to keep your BGLs on track is so important before, during and after sex!

TAKE 5

1. Be informed – find out what's happening to your body
2. Talk to your doctor
3. Talk to your partner about contraceptive choices
4. Try not to get stressed about it
5. Enjoy a safe and fulfilling sex life!

PRODUCED BY **diabetes victoria** www.diabetesvic.org.au
570 Elizabeth Street Melbourne VIC 3000
WE SUPPORT, EMPOWER AND CAMPAIGN FOR ALL VICTORIANS AFFECTED BY DIABETES
NDSS national diabetes services scheme
NDSS IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTERED BY DIABETES AUSTRALIA. THE NDSS AGENT IN VICTORIA IS DIABETES VICTORIA.

FIND US ON **diabetesaustraliavic** **@DiabetesVic**
Email us at teens@diabetesvic.org.au
Call us on 1300 136 588

IN CONJUNCTION WITH **MonashHealth** **Western Health**