

Changes to eligibility for subsidised blood glucose test strips

Tuesday 3 January: Diabetes Victoria urges all people living with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin to consult with a member of their diabetes management team early in the new year – if they wish to continue to check their blood glucose at home.

In July 2016, the Australian Government delisted blood glucose test strips from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. However, these strips are still available at a subsidised price via the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS).

Diabetes Victoria CEO, Craig Bennett explained that from January onwards people with non-insulin-treated type 2 diabetes will need a nominated health professional to confirm their eligibility for access to subsidised strips on the basis of clinical need.

“This change affects more than 812,000 Australians, including over 208,000 Victorians,” Mr Bennett said.

“While the change has been confusing for many and has caused some anxiety, if you have a clinical need you will still be able to access subsidised strips.”

People living with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin were given an additional six months’ supply from July. So, from early January these people will need to have their clinical need for subsidised strips confirmed. A *Blood Glucose Test Strip Six Month Approval* form must be signed by a doctor, credentialed diabetes educator or nurse practitioner and renewed every six months. These forms can be accessed on the Diabetes Victoria or NDSS websites.

People with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes using insulin, gestational diabetes and individuals registered with the NDSS as having ‘other diabetes’ are **not** subject to these changes. These people can continue to access subsidised strips through the NDSS, as before.

Professor Jane Speight, Foundation Director of The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes commented: “I hope this policy change will not send a message that non-insulin-treated type 2 diabetes isn’t as serious as insulin-treated type 2 or type 1 diabetes. It is important to remember that **all** forms of diabetes are serious and **all** need to be managed well to avoid long-term complications.”

“So, I would urge people to speak with their health professionals if they wish to continue self-monitoring at home,” said Professor Speight.

We **support, empower** and **campaign for** all Victorians affected by diabetes.

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Notes:

Professor Speight has previously written about the benefits of structured glucose monitoring for people with type 2 diabetes. See: https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2015/203/9/testing-times-choosing-wisely-when-it-comes-monitoring-type-2-diabetes?0=ip_login_no_cache%3D484f11d265b03f37eaff2da40c7de6ee

According to Professor Speight: “Some people use strips for structured* monitoring, which *can* help people to see how their blood glucose levels are affected by size/type of meals and physical activity, and what they can do to improve them. It has been proven to help keep blood glucose levels in target range, to improve emotional well-being and increase people’s confidence in their diabetes self-care.”

Structured monitoring simply means checking blood glucose at specific times (e.g. before and 2 hours after a meal or a walk) to answer a specific question (e.g. what impact does a 30 minute walk have on my glucose levels?). Doing this in a systematic way over several days shows a pattern and can help a person to see the benefits of relatively small changes to eating and physical activity.