

# An employer's guide

## to diabetes in the workplace



# Contents

Introduction	4
What is diabetes?	5
How is diabetes managed?	6
Rights and responsibilities	10
Employment safety considerations	19
Obtaining and using medical information	23
Case studies	26
Disclosure of diabetes in the workplace	32
Definitions	36
Where can I get help and more information?	38
Hypoglycaemia Emergency Information	42



This resource was developed in response to the questions, requests and concerns Diabetes Victoria has received from employers.

# Introduction

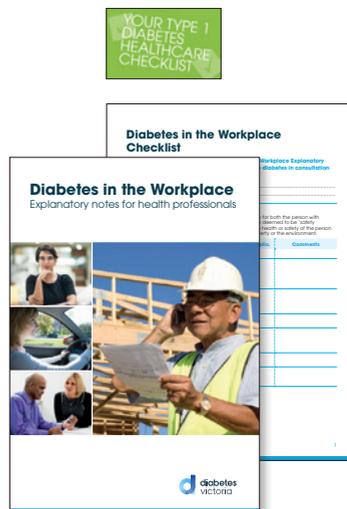
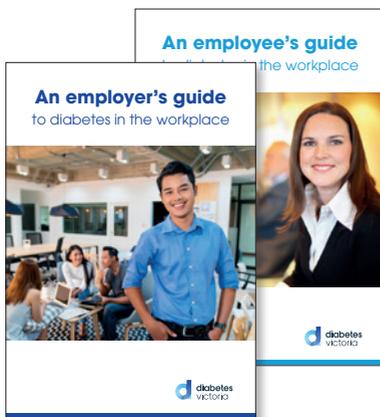
People living with diabetes work in a variety of industries, trades and professions, with diabetes having little or no impact on their work. For this reason, employers often do not know that one of their employees has diabetes, unless it affects their ability to safely and effectively carry out their duties in the workplace.

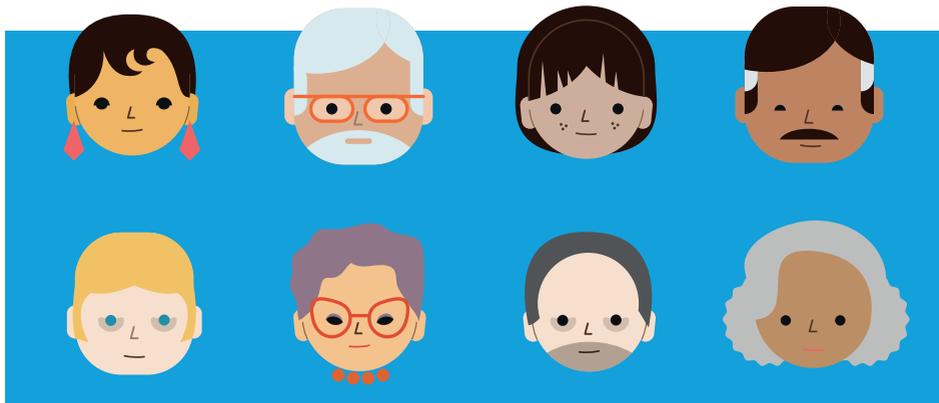
In the following pages, employers will find information and practical examples to help them achieve and maintain workplace safety, encourage job retention while avoiding discrimination and

protecting their rights as an employer. It is to be used in discussion with an employee with diabetes as diabetes management is very individual.

This guide for employers is a companion to Diabetes Victoria's resources:

- An Employee's Guide to diabetes in the workplace
- Explanatory notes for health professionals
- Diabetes in the Workplace Checklist





## What is diabetes?

Diabetes Mellitus (diabetes) is the name given to a group of conditions that occur when the level of glucose (a type of sugar) in the blood becomes higher than normal. Diabetes is a chronic condition that cannot be cured, however it can be well managed. With lifestyle changes and medical treatment, people with diabetes can lead active, healthy and productive working lives.

The two most common forms of diabetes are **type 1 diabetes** and **type 2 diabetes**. Gestational diabetes can also occur in pregnant women, however it usually disappears once the baby is born.

Visit the **Diabetes Victoria** website for information sheets on diabetes.

→ [www.diabetesvic.org.au](http://www.diabetesvic.org.au)



## How is diabetes managed?

The aim of diabetes management is to maintain blood glucose levels as close to a target range as possible in order to prevent diabetes complications. The treatment required to achieve this will vary depending on the type of diabetes and the individual's treatment plan decided in consultation with their doctor or endocrinologist (diabetes

specialist) and other health care professionals. All people with or without diabetes are encouraged to exercise regularly and enjoy a healthy diet. People with diabetes are also encouraged to have regular medical check-ups with their diabetes treating team and they may need to check their blood glucose levels throughout the day.



***Colleagues and employees are to be given privacy and respect when carrying out health care tasks related to their diabetes.***

## **Type 1 diabetes**

People with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin either by several insulin injections throughout the day or through a continuous infusion via an insulin pump.

Colleagues and employees with diabetes may have to take their insulin during working hours. This will not impact on daily work tasks.

## **Type 2 diabetes**

Some people with type 2 diabetes may require oral or injections of medicines and/ or insulin to treat their diabetes.

They may need to take these treatments during work hours. This will not impact on daily work tasks.

## **Gestational diabetes**

Healthy eating, regular exercise and regular checking of blood glucose levels is also required to manage gestational diabetes. However some people may require oral medications and/or insulin to maintain blood glucose levels within their target range.



## Diabetes technology

Some people with diabetes also manage their health condition with the help of diabetes technology:

### Insulin pump

An insulin pump is a small, computerized piece of equipment about the size of a pager. It is programmed to deliver insulin slowly into the fatty tissue via a thin tube that sits under the skin, 24 hours a day. The user can adjust the pump to deliver extra insulin to match the amount of carbohydrates they are going to eat or to correct high blood glucose levels.



### Continuous glucose monitor (CGM)

A continuous glucose monitor (CGM) is a small wearable device that measures glucose levels throughout the day and night. It alerts the user with an alarm if blood glucose levels are too low or too high.

These devices reduce the number of daily finger prick checks. Some CGMs can be linked directly to insulin pumps while others send information to a CGM receiver or smart phone.

### FreeStyle Libre Flash Glucose Monitoring System

The FreeStyle Libre measures and records blood glucose levels by using a compact hand held reader to scan a small sensor which is worn on the back of the upper arm. It also reduces the number of routine finger prick checks.

# Case study



**John** is the Store Manager for a low cost variety store. He has a young employee who voluntarily disclosed she was recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. He said she had given him some emergency information on hypoglycaemia but he wanted specific information on the practicalities of supporting her manage her diabetes on a day-to-day basis.

The idea of a work place diabetes plan was discussed. Such a plan would cover the following key points:

- Insulin administration and storage
- Blood glucose monitoring – storage and access to monitoring supplies, regular scheduled breaks to monitor BGLs and ability to monitor on an ‘as needed’ basis
- Hypoglycaemia (hypo) – low blood glucose levels
- Hypo first aid at work
- Where in the workplace to undertake diabetes health tasks
- Equipment - Storage/location/disposal of sharps container.

**John was going to discuss this work plan idea with the employee.**



# Rights and responsibilities

## What are my rights and responsibilities as an employer to prevent workplace discrimination?

Employers have the right to run their business as they choose, but they are also responsible for preventing discrimination against staff members with diabetes. All employers have legal obligations and responsibilities under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and a range of other Acts including the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Anti-discrimination laws apply to all workplaces.

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) requires employers to appoint employees and contractors based on merit. This Act protects:

- All employees, whether full-time, part-time, casual, temporary and probationary
- Contractors and those on commission
- People applying for a job.

These legal responsibilities apply to all stages of employment including:

- Recruitment
- Access to entitlements and promotions
- Returning to work
- Job retention
- Dismissal
- Retrenchment
- Retirement.

It is also unlawful for employers to:

- Ask someone for information that may be used in a discriminatory way
- Victimise someone who has made a complaint of unlawful discrimination
- Ask, encourage or help another person to discriminate against another person.

The Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992:

- Protects everyone in Australia against discrimination based on a disability
- Prohibits discrimination against someone with a disability in public areas of life. Public life includes some work places
- Prohibits harassment because of a disability. For example, insulting and/or making humiliating jokes are against the law in employment and education settings, as well as in the provision of goods at service facilities.



***Anti-discrimination laws apply to all workplaces.***

Other key anti-discrimination laws include:

- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

For more information about these Acts and your responsibilities as an employer contact the **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** and the **Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry**.

Refer to page 38 for their contact details.

### **Is diabetes a disability?**

**Yes.**

Type 1 and type 2 diabetes are both considered disabilities and are protected attributes under the State and Federal Acts mentioned above.



## Reasonable adjustments in the workplace

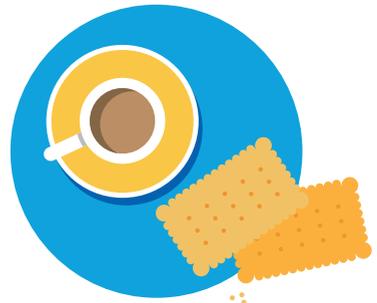
Employees with diabetes may require the following in order to successfully perform the essential work tasks and manage their diabetes at work:

- A workspace with secure access to blood glucose checking equipment, medicines and insulin if needed
- An allowance for extra breaks to check their blood glucose levels, take regular meals, treat hypoglycaemic episodes and take their insulin
- Access to a private, clean place to do the above mentioned health care tasks and somewhere to safely dispose of sharps and/or medical waste
- Regular hours of work. If this is not possible, then a regular rotating roster
- Confidentiality and respect for handling of their medical history
- Flexibility for medical appointments

- Access to emergency hypo prevention/treatment provisions at their place of work and a first aid kit (Refer to page 42 for information on hypoglycaemia emergency information).

Some employees may experience diabetes complications such as vision loss, emotional distress, nerve damage or amputation (cutting off a limb) and will require further individual workplace adjustments.

The Federal Government provides funds for employers to help with costs that may be associated with workplace adjustments through the Employment Assistance Fund. For further information, contact one of the JobAccess advisers. Their contact details are at the back of this booklet.



# What kinds of discrimination can employers avoid in the workplace?

**Direct and indirect discrimination** are prohibited under Victoria’s Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

## Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination is when an employee is treated less favourably because of an attribute that is protected. Examples of direct discrimination against an employee with diabetes include, if an employer:

- Refuses to employ a person after an employment medical identifies diabetes, except for safety sensitive work
- Limits an existing employee’s job responsibilities
- Refuses promotions and training once diabetes is disclosed
- Fires an employer at the time diabetes is diagnosed.

## Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when a workplace has requirements or practices that may appear fair but in fact discriminate against people on the basis of a particular characteristic.

Examples of indirect discrimination include if an employer is **unwilling** to:

- Agree to an employee’s need for regular meals or snacks at their work station
- Provide a private and clean location where an existing employee can check their blood glucose levels and take their insulin.

Often discrimination in the workplace occurs because employers and co-workers do not understand diabetes and how it is managed.

People with diabetes are not to be disadvantaged or discriminated against by their employer or any members of staff.



## Who is responsible if discriminations occur in the workplace?

Employers are liable (legally bound and responsible) for the behaviour of their staff. If a staff member discriminates, the organisation/business has indirect (vicarious) liability.

Those who discriminate at work could face a formal complaint being lodged against them by an employee with the **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** or the **Australian Human Rights Commission**.

They could also be sued individually along with the employer organisation. Employees can seek legal actions and financial payments at the Federal Court and Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Employers are also responsible for any discriminatory selection processes carried out by their agents, for example recruitment firms and consultants contracted by your organisation to recruit staff.

## Are there times where an employer can discriminate?

**Yes.**

There are times where an employer can discriminate against (exclude) a person with diabetes or any other disability/medical condition. This includes if that person cannot perform all the main tasks of the job; even after special additional services or provisions have been provided.

If an employee is currently unable to meet workplace safety standards, the employer has the right to ask them for a medical report from their endocrinologist (diabetes specialist) stating that they are fit to safely perform the required task/s. For example if an electrician with diabetes is unable to work at heights following frequent hypoglycaemic episodes.

Discrimination criteria can also be waived if authorised by a court or tribunal order, or under the provision of an Act of Parliament or regulation under an Act.

## Are there jobs that have restrictions for those with diabetes?

**Yes.**

It is the responsibility of the person with diabetes to seek out this information and make their own career and job choices.

Generally, jobs where an episode of hypoglycaemia could put the employee, co-workers, the general public, property or the environment at risk are considered to be 'safety sensitive'. They will have restrictions in place for people with diabetes. These include:

### Australian Armed Forces

If a person takes insulin they cannot serve in the Armed Forces. All members of the Armed Forces must meet certain criteria. This is one employer who does not have to include people who do not meet their criteria.

### Police, Fire and Ambulance Services

If a person with diabetes wants to apply for a job in any of these

industries, they need to check out what the requirements are in their state or territory. The processes and conditions are different across Australia.

### **Transport of passengers**

Eg. aeroplanes, buses, trains and trams.

### **Transporting hazardous (dangerous) materials or large cargos**

Eg. explosives and petrol.

### **Working at heights**

Eg. on construction sites and using ladders.

### **Jobs involving the use of potentially dangerous machinery**

Eg. large pieces of machinery or equipment used in construction, manufacturing or engineering industries, heavy vehicles or heavy hydraulics

### **Working offshore**

Eg. on an oil rig.

### **Prison Service/Community Corrections**

Eg. Prison Officer, Community Corrections Officer or Field Officer

### **Taxi Drivers/Uber Drivers**

In Victoria, drivers who require insulin will need to submit medical assessments to VicRoads Medical Review and the Taxi Services Commission. They will also need to provide medical reports from their endocrinologist supporting their application.

### **Flight Cabin Crew**

Staff who require insulin are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the airline's medical advisor. They will also need to provide medical reports from their endocrinologist supporting their application. Jobs are limited to flights that have multi-crews with commercial airlines.



***Jobs in these categories are not necessarily unsuitable for people with diabetes. Each job needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.***

Your organisation needs to have clear policies and procedures in place for safety sensitive jobs. This information needs to be available from your recruitment, human resources and/or medical and/or advisory staff. Additionally, you can discuss your individual workplace with staff at the **WorkSafe Advisory Service** and/or a member of Diabetes Victoria's advocacy team. The contact details are at the back of this booklet.

## What happens if an employee lodges a workplace discrimination claim?

This depends which Act the employee's discrimination claim relates to, as procedures vary. In the first instance, you will receive formal notification of the complaint with instructions on how to reply, your rights, responsibilities, deadlines for replying and any possible costs. For additional information visit the **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** website.





# Employment safety considerations

## How do employers deal with safety concerns in the workplace?

Sometimes employers question the safety of an employee with diabetes in their given job. Safety concerns for a desk-based office worker will be quite different to the safety concerns of an employee who operates heavy machinery.

It is the employee's personal responsibility to maintain their health and wellbeing at work.

Most people with diabetes recognise their body's warning signals of hypoglycaemia or hyperglycaemia and are able to take immediate action to restore their blood glucose level to a target range.

In cases of medical emergency, employers are to follow the same safety procedures for all employees, including those with diabetes.

## What is hypoglycaemia and how can it affect an employee?

Hypoglycaemia is when the blood glucose level of a person taking insulin or certain medicines to treat their diabetes drops below 4mmol/L.

Hypoglycaemia can cause shaking, weakness, blurred vision, drowsiness, reduced thinking and reasoning. It may also lead to unconsciousness if not treated early.

Most episodes of hypoglycaemia can be self-detected and self-treated by the person with diabetes. On rare occasions the employee with diabetes will need medical assistance.

## What are employer considerations at times of hypoglycaemia (hypo)?

If an employee is having a hypo they will need to:

- Stop working immediately
- Access their blood glucose checking equipment

- Check their blood glucose levels as often as they need
- Take their hypo treatment as required
- Resume work tasks once their blood glucose levels rise above 4mmol/L and their symptoms pass.

The impact of a hypoglycaemic episode can take 30 minutes or more to recover from. It is advisable the person stop their work tasks until this happens.

An employee must take extra precautions as listed in their diabetes management plan if their work tasks involve:

- Operating heavy machinery
- Driving
- Performing hazardous (dangerous) duties.

Refer to the Diabetes Victoria resource **An Employee's Guide to diabetes in the workplace** for more information on hypoglycaemia and suitable treatment options (refer to page 42 for hypoglycaemia emergency information).

## What can employers do if an employee is having repeated episodes of hypoglycaemia (hypos) at work?

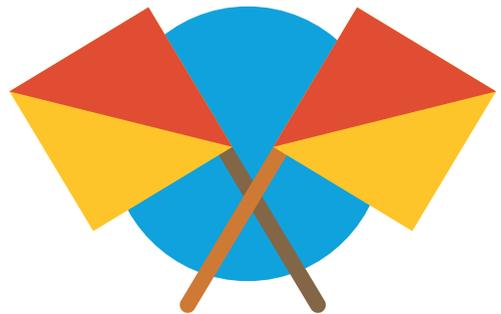
In these situations, hypoglycaemia can be unsafe and put the employee, colleagues, members of the general public, equipment and the environment at risk.

Regular episodes of **severe** hypoglycaemia where the person is unconscious and an ambulance is required are not a normal part of diabetes. An urgent review by the employee's medical specialist and diabetes treating team is required.

If episodes of hypoglycaemia are affecting an employee's

ability to carry out their job as described in their position description, then employers may ask the employee to show they are medically fit to carry out their job after the necessary adjustments have been made to aid the employee with diabetes. This involves an assessment from their endocrinologist (diabetes specialist). The endocrinologist will prepare a written report that addresses the employee's medical fitness to carry out their essential work duties.

If the employee works in a safety sensitive area, medical leave, restrictions or changes to their duties may be required until they are medically fit to resume their full duties. Follow your established workplace policies and procedures in this matter.



## What is hyperglycaemia and how can this affect an employee?

Hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose) is when blood glucose levels (BGLs) are above target for a period of time and may result in thirst, frequent urination and blurred vision. It may also affect thinking, concentration and problem solving.

A person experiencing hyperglycaemia may need to drink more, go to the toilet more often and check their BGLs more frequently whilst taking action to return his/her BGLs back in target.

## I think that an employee has unstable blood glucose levels that are impacting on their ability to carry out their job. Can I ask to see their blood glucose diary?

**No.**

As an employer you are not legally allowed to ask to see your employee's blood glucose diary. This is an invasion of their privacy.

If you believe that diabetes is affecting your employee's ability to carry out their job, then follow the process on page 28.





# Obtaining and using medical information

The following are some frequently asked questions from employers with a job applicant and/or an employee who has long standing diabetes or has been recently diagnosed:

## **What medical information can an employer request from a job applicant with diabetes?**

Employers are responsible for treating all job applicants, including those with diabetes, in a non-discriminatory manner.



*Generally, to obtain medical information from an employee, an employer must have a reason to believe that the employee is a safety risk.*

It is against the law for an employer to discriminate, either directly or indirectly against a candidate/applicant or existing employee for any employment position, contract, traineeship or apprenticeship on the basis of:

- Breastfeeding
- Carer status or parental status
- Impairment – this includes people with diabetes
- Gender identity
- Industrial activity
- Lawful sexual activity
- Marital status
- Physical features
- Political belief or activity
- Pregnancy
- Cultural background
- Religious beliefs or activities
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Personal association with a person who is identified by any of the above attributes.

The above are currently protected by law for all people employed in Victoria. For further information about the above list contact the **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** (See the back of this booklet for contact details).

When selecting staff, employers need to consider a person's skills and experience and how relevant they are to the requirements of the job.

## What medical information can an employer request from an employee with diabetes?

Generally, to obtain medical information from an employee, an employer must have a reason to believe that the employee is a safety risk.

If an employee's ability to perform all the main tasks of a specific job is questioned, the employer has the right to require the employee to provide a medical report from their endocrinologist (diabetes specialist) stating they are fit to perform all required work tasks.



# Case studies



**Brian** is a manager at a community legal centre. A member of his reception staff was not answering numerous phone calls and was not at the reception desk to greet clients.

The staff member says he/she feels tired all the time, is always thirsty and frequently needs to go to the toilet. Brian had reason to believe

that diabetes may be affecting the receptionist's ability to perform his/her essential duties.

He asked the receptionist if he/she has a medical condition. When the employee confirmed he/she had diabetes, Brian requested he/she provide a medical report.

**The receptionist's diabetes management plan was reviewed and updated, resulting in improved wellbeing and job performance.**



**Mary** is the manager of a major supermarket chain. She has a staff member with long standing type 2 diabetes who has just started taking insulin and will need to take insulin during some of her shifts.

The employee voluntarily disclosed medical information so they could arrange a clean private space to take their insulin.

**Here the employer can ask how often the employee would need shift breaks.** This question was to determine if adjustments will be required at work.

Mary is not entitled to ask questions about the employee's personal or family medical history.

## **If an employee tells their employer they have diabetes, what questions can an employer ask about their condition?**

- Whether they need any ***reasonable adjustments*** at their workplace to attend to their daily diabetes management and health care needs
- What type of adjustment they may require eg. regular scheduled meal breaks.

## **What if an employer is worried about the work performance of an employee with diabetes?**

The same procedures are to be followed for all employees when an assessment of work performance or action is required.

If the medical fitness of an employee with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes or gestational diabetes result in changes in that employee's ability to carry out the required job tasks, their employer can request a medical report. This medical report from the employee's medical specialist needs to be in the form of a personalised employment assessment. The assessment needs to be based on sufficient and appropriate medical information with input from all treating doctors, together with a detailed listing of all job tasks.

In most cases, the costs of such medical reports are the employee's responsibility.

Sometimes employers move an employee with diabetes to another work position by mutual agreement.

# Case study



**Max** is a supervisor on an off-shore oil rig. A recently appointed electrical contractor with long standing type 1 diabetes had a hypoglycaemic episode while on-shore.

In keeping with company policy, Max requested the contractor provide an individualised assessment from an endocrinologist that clearly stated he could

safely perform his job. He was also required to have an action plan in place. This follows company policy to ensure workplace safety while on-shore and at sea for the individual co-workers, property and the environment. It also helps prevent a costly air medical evacuation in the case of hypoglycaemia while off-shore.

With the contractor's permission, Max asked the first aid officer to ensure a hypo kit was kept close at hand. **The medical reports provided supporting evidence that this contractor could safely perform his duties. It would be unlawful for the employer to have sacked this contractor.**

In this instance the employer followed the required processes by obtaining a personalised medical specialist report stating that Max was fit to perform the job tasks required and the company retained an experienced employee.

# Case study

**Joan** is a quarry manager. Recently one of the quarry's experienced drivers had a hypoglycaemic episode resulting in minor cuts/abrasions and damage to a truck. The accident did not involve the police but it did result in the following:



- The employee had to change duties for six months, as per company policy
- The employee provided a fitness to work safety report from their treating endocrinologist
- The employee spoke to their diabetes educator about measures to prevent hypoglycaemia and the need for a workplace diabetes management plan
- The employee submitted medical reports about the accident to VicRoads Medical Review and conditions were placed on his commercial driving licence for several months
- Both the employee and employer notified all insurance companies involved.

The employee accepted an invitation to attend Diabetes Victoria's Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating (DAFNE) program for people with type 1 diabetes. This is an intensive education program where people learn the skills to work out how much insulin they need for the amount of carbohydrate in the food they wish to eat. The program also covers other topics such as; managing hypoglycaemia, exercise, illness, diabetes complications and goal setting.

While the driver's overall work performance was not questioned, his impaired awareness of hypoglycaemia posed a direct safety threat to himself, his co-workers and some expensive equipment.

In consultation with the employee's medical advisers, a personalised diabetes management plan was introduced to prevent a similar incident happening again.

In this instance the employer followed the required processes by **obtaining a personalised medical specialist report** stating that Max was fit to perform the job tasks required and the company **retained an experienced employee.**





## Disclosure of diabetes in the workplace

Generally employees with diabetes make personal choices about whether to tell their employer they have diabetes. These choices vary from those who are happy to share all the details about their health condition, to those who prefer to keep their health condition private and separate while at work.

Diabetes Victoria encourages employees with diabetes to seek professional advice before telling their employer about their health

condition. (Refer to page 42 of the **Employee's Guide to Diabetes in the workplace** which suggests sources of help. Pages 18/19 provide some case examples of whether or not to tell an employer about their diabetes).

Employers are welcome to contact Diabetes Victoria for information about diabetes. They can also have a confidential discussion with our diabetes educators and/or a member of our advocacy team.

## Driving

Driving a motor vehicle is a complex task involving awareness, appropriate judgement, adequate response time and reasonable physical capability.

For people with diabetes, the ability to drive safely can be affected by:

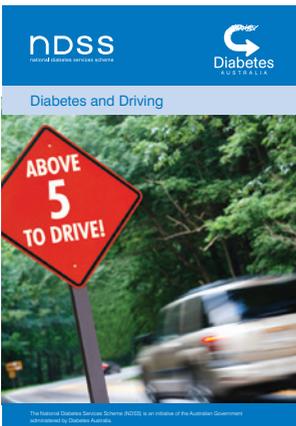
- Hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels)
- Hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose levels)
- Reduced vision due to damage to the retina in the eye (retinopathy)
- Reduced feeling in the feet (neuropathy).

## Does an employee with diabetes have to tell their employer they have this health condition if they are driving a company car?

**Yes.**

In Victoria, it is a legal requirement for all car drivers as well as learner drivers to notify VicRoads Medical Review if they have type 1 or type 2 diabetes being managed on insulin or glucose lowering agents. This is also so the employer can fulfil the requirements of the insurance company that insures their workplace vehicles.

There are different requirements for both private and commercial vehicles. Further information about VicRoads' requirements is available from **VicRoads**.



## Is a medical report required when an employee with diabetes is operating heavy machinery?

**Yes.**

Employees with diabetes who are required to operate heavy machinery require written medical clearance from their diabetes medical specialist confirming they are fit to do so.

Safe operation can be affected by low or high blood glucose levels, complications of diabetes and some prescription medications.

If the employee is at risk of hypoglycaemia from diabetes and is operating heavy machinery, it is important that they take regular food breaks and check their blood glucose levels regularly.

## Can a person with diabetes wear the same personal protective footwear as other employees?

Safety comes first in all jobs.

**Worksafe** has clear guidelines on what is expected of employers and employees in regard to personal protective clothing and footwear.

An employee with diabetes needs to meet Worksafe requirements, although they may need to be equipped with clothing that also meets their diabetes requirements. The most common situation where this will occur is with footwear. The person with diabetes may need to discuss the most suitable footwear with their podiatrist to ensure all requirements are met.



Many employers have staff members with diabetes in their workplace.

To confidentially discuss any matters about diabetes in the workplace, contact Diabetes Victoria.

Call 1300 136 588 or visit  
→ [www.diabetesvic.org.au](http://www.diabetesvic.org.au)

# Definitions

## Employment

The Federal Workplace Relations Act 1996 defines employment as a contract of service, whether a person is employed under a certified agreement, employment agreement or an award. The Public Administration Act 2004 defines employment as the engagement of a person under a contract to provide a service. Work is also defined to be when a person is remunerated (paid), even on commission.

## Endocrinologist

An endocrinologist is a medical doctor who specialises in diabetes and illnesses of the endocrine system.

## Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas is unable to make the hormone insulin. Insulin is necessary to allow the body to use glucose for energy. Type 1 diabetes is treated with insulin which is given with injections several times a day or by an insulin pump. Only 10 to 15 out of 100 people with diabetes have type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition. This means the body's own immune system destroys the cells that make insulin.



## **Type 2 diabetes**

Type 2 diabetes is a condition where the pancreas still makes insulin, but it may not make enough, or the insulin that is being made, does not do its job properly. If glucose cannot enter the cells, it builds up in the blood stream and causes blood glucose levels to rise. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes and affects 85 to 90 of every 100 people with diabetes.

It usually develops in adults over the age of 45, but is now being seen in younger people too. In the early stages type 2 diabetes can often be managed with a healthy lifestyle. Over time many people with type 2 diabetes need medication and/or insulin injections as well.

## **Gestational diabetes**

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that is first picked up in pregnancy and goes away after a baby is born.

Gestational diabetes occurs when the mother's body is unable to cope sufficiently with the increased level of hormones from the placenta. These hormones block the action of the mother's insulin. This is called insulin resistance. A woman with gestational diabetes will need to check her blood glucose levels regularly, enjoy a healthy diet and may require insulin injections and/or medication.

## **Severe hypoglycaemia**

Severe hypoglycaemia or a 'severe hypo' happens when a person with diabetes has a low blood glucose level and is unable to treat themselves (ie. they need assistance from another person or an ambulance paramedic).

# Where can I get help and more information?

## Beyondblue

beyondblue is a national independent, not-for-profit organisation that promotes good mental health, tackles stigma and discrimination and provides support and information on anxiety, depression and suicide. beyondblue has information specifically about the workplace and is able to link you to professional help.

Call 1300 22 4636 or visit  
→ [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

## Berrill & Watson

Berrill & Watson lawyers are specialists in superannuation and insurance issues for people with a disability.

Call 03 9448 8048 or visit  
→ [www.berrillwatson.com.au](http://www.berrillwatson.com.au)

## Business Victoria

Provides resources for businesses across Victoria to help them start up, develop and grow. Managed by the Victorian government, they offer resources for employers on workplace safety, rights and ideas for recruiting and managing staff.

Call 13 22 15 or visit  
→ [www.business.vic.gov.au](http://www.business.vic.gov.au)

## Diabetes Victoria

Diabetes Victoria is the peak consumer body and leading charity representing all people affected by diabetes and those at risk.

For website information sheets, linkage to services, resources and advocacy call the diabetes helpline on 1300 136 588 or visit  
→ [www.diabetesvic.org.au](http://www.diabetesvic.org.au)

## Health websites

Reliable sources of diabetes and general health information is available from:

→ [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

→ [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)

Both websites are government funded and provide quality, approved health information.

## JobAccess

JobAccess is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. It provides information on financial support, workplace modifications, help with finding and changing jobs, creating flexible work environments, links to career advice and training courses and a range of other tools and resources for people with disability, employers and service providers.

JobAccess Advisers can be contacted on 1800 464 800 or visit  
→ [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)

## Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers are specialists in employment, superannuation and insurance issues for people with a disability.

Call 1800 991 692 or visit

→ [www.mauriceblackburn.com.au](http://www.mauriceblackburn.com.au)

## Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) Privacy and Data Protection

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) Privacy and Data Protection collects, uses and discloses personal information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (PDPA) and other applicable legislation.

For any privacy complaints call 1300 666 444 or visit

→ [www.cpdp.vic.gov.au](http://www.cpdp.vic.gov.au)

## **Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)**

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is an independent, non-government organisation that represents the interests of Victoria's business community and industry. Their Workplace Relations advice line provides members with up-to-date, independent and accurate advice on a range of workplace relations issues over-the-phone.

Call (03) 8662 5333 or visit  
→ [www.victorianchamber.com.au](http://www.victorianchamber.com.au)

## **VicRoads**

VicRoads provides road, registration and licensing services, including medical reviews throughout Victoria.

Call 13 11 71 or visit  
→ [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au)

## **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**

The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission can help resolve complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment and racial and religious vilification.

Call their Enquiry Line on 1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583 or visit  
→ [www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/)

## **WorkSafe Victoria**

WorkSafe Victoria is a government organisation which offers information, advice and help about insurance protection, work-related injury claims, returning to work and safety in the workplace.

Call their advisory service on 1800 136 089 or visit  
→ [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/)



# Hypoglycaemia

## Emergency Information

1

### Spot the symptoms

Hypoglycaemia is a blood glucose level that falls below 4 mmol/L and can only occur if a person is on certain medications and/or insulin.

#### Early signs

Sweating  
Weakness  
Pale skin  
Trembling  
Dizziness  
Heart palpitations  
Hunger

#### Late signs

Confusion  
Drowsiness  
Changes in mood/behaviour  
Lack of co-ordination  
Slurred speech  
Loss of consciousness  
Seizures

2

### Treat quickly

If the person is conscious give glucose or 15g of sugar immediately;

e.g. one of the following:

- 6-7 jelly beans
- ½ can regular soft drink (not diet soft drink)
- 3 teaspoons of sugar or honey dissolved in water
- Glucose tablets equivalent to 15g of carbohydrate (approximately 3)

### 3

## Emergency action

You might need to encourage the person to eat or drink but if they are unable to swallow do not give drink or food. Symptoms should improve in 10-15 minutes. Stay with the person and ask them to re-check their blood glucose after 15 minutes.

Once the blood glucose level is above 4 mmol/L and the person feels better, he/she can go back to work.

It may be necessary to follow up with a long acting carbohydrate snack such as dry biscuits, a piece of fruit or a sandwich.

If the person is too drowsy to eat or drink, has a seizure or is unconscious, get emergency help!

Turn the person onto their left side and do not give fluid or food.

Call 000 for an ambulance and state that it is a 'Diabetes Emergency'.

Stay with him/her.



Know your rights and responsibilities as an employer of people with diabetes.

