

# Workplace Toolkit

for employees



# Introduction

Type 1 diabetes is no barrier to a successful, rewarding and fulfilling career. However, some people worry about what bearing their diabetes will have on their employment, whether they should tell their employer or how they will be supported.

Type 1 diabetes is classed as an 'unseen disability' under the The Equality Act 2010 and while you may not feel disabled, this classification can help to protect you against discrimination at work.

## Should I share with my employer that I have type 1 diabetes?

Some people prefer not to tell their employers that they have type 1 diabetes either because they are managing their condition and don't feel it's necessary to share the information or through fear of discrimination. Before deciding whether to share this information consider whether it is likely to be useful/helpful to you and your employer both in the short/long-term. Things to help inform your decision might be:

1. The environment you work in – how easy is it to test your blood glucose levels, take breaks etc
2. If at a later stage you wish to ask for reasonable adjustments, for example because your circumstances change, you become pregnant etc

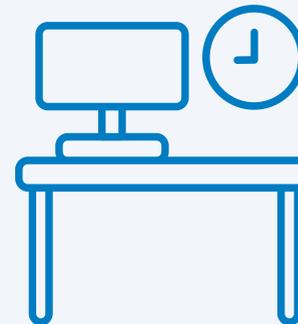
3. Should you fall ill at work and need your employer to share information

## Your workplace

If you work in an environment where you are free to leave your workstation, get food, take short breaks then you may not feel the need to share your type 1 diabetes with your employer or colleagues as it doesn't impinge on your delivery. However, managing your diabetes may be slightly more difficult if you work in retail, construction, hospitality etc where it is more difficult to step away from your role, briefly, and unnoticed in which case it might be advisable to share that you have type 1 diabetes with your employer. Think about how your workplace affects how you treat and manage your type 1 diabetes then consider sharing what your needs are with your employer.

Wherever you work your employer will be expected to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the condition where necessary. There is no legal definition as to what qualifies as a reasonable adjustment and in many cases your employer may already offer a number of initiatives but some examples include:

- Flexibility to step away briefly from your role to treat/manage your type 1 diabetes
- Flexibility over lunch and tea breaks if you work shifts
- Providing a private place to inject (this should not be a toilet)
- Offering 'sharps' boxes in the workplace
- Providing well stocked hypo kits
- In some cases, changing duties or a transfer to an alternative position may be possible



If your employer has a learning and development programme they may consider time off for structured education courses such as DAFNE (Dose Adjustment For Normal Eating or equivalents) under that policy. If you're not sure – ask!

Many adjustments are simple and cost effective for your employer to make and they are more likely to do so if they understand the benefit in making these adjustments. However, if your employer is unwilling to make adjustments they should inform you, in writing, why they consider your requests to be unreasonable. Remember you may wish to remind your employer of their obligation under The Equality Act 2010.

## Changes in your circumstances

You may have worked in the same organisation for years and never felt the need to mention you have type 1 diabetes. However, if your circumstances change and this impacts your treatment/management of your type 1 diabetes then this may be the time to flag up your condition. An example is if you become pregnant and may require more time off for appointments.

JDRF has a Pregnancy Toolkit, plus a wide range of support and information resources, available at: [jdrf.org.uk/pregnancy](http://jdrf.org.uk/pregnancy)

## Falling ill at work

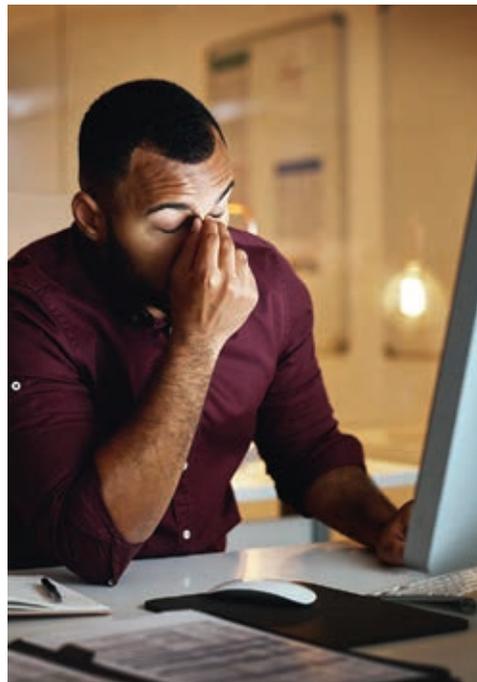
Many employers ask staff to fill out questionnaires upon joining their organisation. This information should meet GDPR regulations and your organisation must show there to be a legitimate reason for keeping it on record. They may ask you to provide details relating to your health and emergency contacts should you fall ill at work. This information should remain with the Human Resources team and only be used when necessary, so if you fall ill for any reason it may be important that your employer knows about your type 1 diabetes in case they need to share this information with health care professionals in an emergency.

In addition it may be useful to share signs of a hypo to close colleagues and what they can do to help should you need it. You may find this informal approach helps you, but also helps to inform colleagues who may not previously have been aware of type 1 diabetes and what the condition is and how you manage

it. Examples of what you may want to share could range from what to include in a hypo kit to how your behaviour might change when you are having a hypo, depending on how comfortable you are sharing this information.

## Does my type 1 diabetes allow me to take time off work?

Your employer should allow you to take time off work where necessary. The law does not dictate that the time off should necessarily be paid, however, some organisations may be happy to do so. Check your policies to see what your employer offers. Time off work is covered by the The Equality Act 2010, which means that an



*I do have difficulty with appointments though, as these can be difficult to fit in to my work schedule. The one I struggle with is my annual eye check. I live quite a long way out and not being able to drive to the appointment is an issue.*

Jake, Systems Engineer at Sellafield



employer should make reasonable adjustments to stop you being disadvantaged in comparison with workers without a disability. For example, when a bonus is linked to not exceeding a maximum number of days of absence, if your type 1 diabetes has caused you to exceed this amount then your employer should take steps to factor out days taken specifically as a result of type 1 diabetes.

If your type 1 diabetes has caused you to have more time off work than the maximum allowance, it is reasonable for the organisation not to pay you for days beyond the maximum sick days allowance. Note that some organisations may operate a separate disability leave policy.

If your time off work can be reasonably accommodated by your employer, you should not be at risk of losing your job. However, if absences are affecting the organisation in a way that cannot

be sustained, dismissal may be deemed fair. For example, if your type 1 diabetes has led you to be off work for a long time and you are unlikely to return to work soon, an employer could be acting fairly if they choose to terminate your position. It is therefore important to maintain good communication with your employer regarding your condition and how it affects you. It's important that you are aware of what your company policies are and how these might impact you.

## Does an employer have the right to know my medical history?

In most cases it is your choice whether you tell your employer or not. A prospective employer is not normally allowed to ask you about your health or disability before an employment offer is made (unless it is strictly relevant to the tasks required of the job, or in order to make reasonable adjustments for you). Once an



offer is made or you have taken up the position you will need to tell your employer about your type 1 diabetes if you want them to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate things like taking regular breaks to check your blood glucose levels or treat hypos (of course the necessity of this will depend very much on the type of environment you work in). If you feel uncomfortable about having this conversation, you could suggest that you bring a colleague or union representative with you.

A lot of people living with type 1 diabetes fully understand their

condition and will usually know what they need to help them cope, so it is important that you communicate with your employer about this. Keeping in contact during periods of prolonged sickness is also important and in some situations your employer may also work with you to develop a formal return-to-work or job-retention plan to encourage you back to work. Please note this is support your employer should be offering to all staff with prolonged sickness absence.

For further advice or guidance it is best to seek advice from your HR team or union representative.

## Jobs that prohibit people with **type 1 diabetes**

Only the Armed Forces are exempt from The Equality Act 2010 and have a blanket ban on employing people with type 1 diabetes. Some emergency services may prohibit people with type 1 diabetes working for them, but this is not a blanket ban and the decision is now down to the local area.

### **Managing shift work**

There is no medical evidence indicating you shouldn't perform shift work; however, you should be aware that managing type 1 diabetes may become more difficult, especially if you are working a rapidly changing shift pattern. However, through careful planning, successful management of type 1 diabetes can be achieved no matter what hours you work. Consider speaking to your employer about how this affects your type 1 diabetes and what reasonable adjustments your employer could make.

### **If you need to drive a car or a bike in your job**

When you are diagnosed or living with type 1 diabetes, you are

legally obliged to inform the DVLA. You should consider whether to tell your employer about your type 1 diabetes if your role requires you to drive (although it's not a legal requirement).

The main concern of the driving authorities is the possibility of hypoglycaemia while driving and complications associated with eye sight so it is important you are familiar with the legal requirements of a driving licence if your role requires you to drive.

### **If you need to drive other vehicles in your job**

Being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes can also affect your entitlement to drive a minibus, coach, bus or lorry. You'll need to fill out your medical questionnaire and report, then a specialist medical questionnaire you're given by your healthcare team. You'll then need an appointment with an independent diabetes consultant nominated by the DVLA.

You also need to prove that you regularly check your blood

glucose on a meter with a memory function and that you have not had a hypo that has needed the help of another person in the last 12 months.

See more here: [www.gov.uk/guidance/diabetes-mellitus-assessing-fitness-to-drive](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/diabetes-mellitus-assessing-fitness-to-drive)

## Dealing with discrimination

Sometimes discrimination in the workplace can occur because employers don't understand type 1 diabetes and how it is managed. Your employer may be concerned about loss of work time and productivity, and this may influence their willingness to hire or support you within the workplace. The Equality Act 2010 protects people with type 1 diabetes from discrimination at

work, and requires an employer to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and job applicants who are disadvantaged as a result of their disability. For example, if you need to take a short break to have a snack or check your blood glucose level. In Northern Ireland, employees are protected by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

If you do have any concerns or feel that you might not be being treated fairly speak to your HR team, union representative or diabetes team in the first instance. It may be that the situation can be resolved simply by increasing understanding or making reasonable adjustments. However, if things don't improve there are a number of organisations you could contact for support:



*The one thing I struggle with is not wanting to be perceived as a burden on my employer. I want to be viewed the same as everybody else with no special treatment.*

Sarah, Accountant



- The Equality Act and your rights: [www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities](http://www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities)
- Employment law rights relevant to carers: [www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career](http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career)
- ACAS guidance on the right to request flexible working [acas.org.uk/making-a-flexible-working-request](http://acas.org.uk/making-a-flexible-working-request)
- Information about applying for flexible working on GOV.UK [www.gov.uk/flexible-working](http://www.gov.uk/flexible-working)
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides information and advice on a range of topics, including employment: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) for your local branch.
- Disability rights and employment: [www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person](http://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person)
- Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). DEAs can offer advice and practical help for people with disabilities getting into the workplace. They can also offer advice about programmes and grants to help you back into work. Contact your nearest Jobcentre to arrange an appointment.
- Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC): The EHRC promotes equality in England, Scotland, and Wales and provides information and guidance on discrimination and human rights issues. They have produced a series of guides on rights to equality which are available on their website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS): The EASS provides information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues: Tel: **0800 800 0082** or [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Commission promotes equality and challenges discrimination in Northern Ireland: Tel: **028 90 500 600** or [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)
- Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) help with employment relations issues and what employment rights legislation means in practice: Tel: **08457 47 47 47** or [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)



## Further support from JDRF: Type 1 diabetes awareness sessions

Type 1 diabetes awareness sessions can help teach employers and employees of people living with type 1 diabetes, or caring for a child with type 1 diabetes, about the condition. This is vital to ensure that you are informed about the condition, so you can provide the support and arrangements if necessary. While it can often be an invisible condition in the workplace, it can affect people in different ways depending on their connection to the condition.

We appreciate that managing type 1 diabetes is like a full-time job in itself, except you don't get to go home and forget about it. You don't get weekends or annual leave. While scientists continue working to find the cure, type 1 diabetes will continue to be a life-long condition. This is why JDRF continues, with your help, to fund the best research in the world.

Type 1 diabetes demands around-the-clock management – day and night. If you live with type 1 diabetes or care for a child with type 1 diabetes it can have a dramatic effect on your day-to-day life, including while at work.

If you are a parent of a child with type 1 diabetes, just as much as an adult living with it, you also adopt the burden the condition demands.

A JDRF awareness session can include:

- Presentations to raise awareness of type 1 diabetes in the workplace
- A JDRF stand at your office with information on type 1 diabetes to take away

The awareness session can be brought to you and delivered in your workplace. The timings and schedule of the day can be flexible to suit the needs of your organisation and your working hours.

## Further Support from JDRF

In addition to the information sessions JDRF does have a number of resources that can support you and your employer in managing type 1 diabetes in the workplace.

- Straight to the Point is a free book for adults living with type 1 diabetes that you, or your employer, may find useful
  - You can order this, plus our wide range of support and information resources at: [jdrf.org.uk/infopacks](http://jdrf.org.uk/infopacks)
- Discovery events are a series of nationwide events where people with type 1 diabetes or a connection to type 1 diabetes can come and hear about JDRF research and technologies and network with other people with a connection.

They are a mixture of family days (Discovery Days), adult evenings (Discovery Evenings) and Sports Days

- See more here: [jdrf.org.uk/discover](http://jdrf.org.uk/discover)
- Our Community Engagement team or Community Ambassador volunteers could come and deliver a talk or presentation – many employers hold wellness months or initiatives and JDRF could come and provide all employees with an understanding of living and working with type 1 diabetes



*Fortunately I have an employer that is understanding and supportive of people with long-term health conditions.*

Anonymous,  
Trainee Solicitor



# How you can support **JDRF**

If you have found this information useful you may want to find out a little more about the work that JDRF does and how you can get involved, for now though please:

- Support or get involved with JDRF at [jdrf.org.uk](http://jdrf.org.uk)
- Share the employers guide of this document with your workplace
- Talk to your employer about getting involved as a corporate partner



Post: JDRF, 17/18 Angel Gate, City Road, London EC1V 2PT  
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