

# Diabetes Specific Advice

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From <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/life-with-diabetes/employment>

## Applying for jobs

It is unlawful for an employer to operate a blanket ban on recruitment of people with diabetes. Some jobs involving safety-critical work will have legitimate health requirements that may exclude some people with certain medical conditions, including diabetes. Following extensive campaigning by Diabetes UK, the blanket bans have been lifted in the emergency services for people with Type 1 diabetes and people with Type 2 diabetes who use insulin. Decisions made on someone's suitability for employment in these services should be made by a process of individual assessment.

- Recruitment and retention of people with diabetes in the police, fire and ambulance services should now be subject to individual medical assessment. However the UK armed forces are exempt from the Equality Act and can operate a blanket ban on the recruitment of people with diabetes.
- In some NHS Ambulance Trusts, there are still restrictions in place on people with diabetes who wish to be ambulance crew. These restrictions are being challenged. You may find that if you develop diabetes while in employment, your employer may offer to change aspects of your job, for instance by altering your shift patterns. If you are no longer able to meet the health requirements of your job, your employer may offer you a different job in the same organisation. This could be sensible and may be worth considering.
- Shift work: People with diabetes used to be discouraged from doing shift work, but improvements in blood glucose testing and more flexible insulin regimes mean that diabetes is less likely to get in the way.

## When to tell recruiters

It can be difficult to decide when to tell recruiters about your diabetes. The Equality Act now makes it unlawful for an employer to ask about the health of an applicant before offering them work. This is subject to specific identified exceptions, including where: the employer wishes to establish whether the applicant will need adjustments to be made, in connection with arrangements for the assessment process, the employer is asking for monitoring purposes, (but they must not use this information to discriminate against someone with a disability), the employer wants to improve disabled people's chance of getting employment; the question asked is relevant to find out if the applicant can carry out tasks that are absolutely necessary to the job.

In some professions there are specific rules regarding certification and physical qualification and you will have to disclose your diabetes to be properly assessed. But for the most part, there is no legal requirement to disclose diabetes and the decision whether to tell an employer or prospective employer is up to the individual. However, if an employer does not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know that you have diabetes, you may not be able to rely on the Equality Act if you feel you have been discriminated against.

## Telling your colleagues about your diabetes

- Some people are ill-informed about diabetes, and they may respond

irrationally out of fear or ignorance. A simple explanation about diabetes is all you need to give. If you do not treat your diabetes as a problem, it is less likely that your colleagues will.

- Hypo at work: It's important to tell colleagues how to recognise and treat a hypo (hypoglycaemic episode) if you experience these. This will stop them from overreacting at the time and will help to make sure that any hypos you have are treated correctly. Talk to your first aider about your diabetes too and make sure they know what to do in an emergency. If you have had a hypo at work and needed help to treat it, talk to your employer and colleagues afterwards. If possible, explain why the hypo happened to show them that you can normally control the situation and it is unlikely to happen again.
- Taking time off: Everybody takes time off work for sickness or hospital appointments, whether they have diabetes or not. Diabetes does not necessarily make you more prone to sickness. If possible, try to arrange several clinic appointments for the same morning and give your employer plenty of notice of when and why you will be absent. When you are ill, seek prompt medical attention and keep your employer informed of what is happening.
- Sources of support and further information: If you feel discriminated against at work, or that you might have been turned down for a job or dismissed because of your diabetes; you will probably need specialist advice initially, and in some cases legal advice, if you wish to challenge employment decisions.
- If you are a member of a trade union you can obtain help from your union representative.

**Information of note:**

[Support for diabetes in the workplace](#)

[Diabetes and Discrimination](#)

[Type 1 Diabetes and Work - JDRF](#)