

Children and Diabetes

Throughout the world, incidences of diabetes are on the rise, and consequently so is diabetes amongst children. Most children are affected by type 1 diabetes in childhood.

How is diabetes caused in children?

The actual causes of the diabetic condition are little understood, in both children and adults. It is widely speculated that diabetes occurred when inherited genetic characteristics are triggered by environmental factors. It can certainly also be **an autoimmune reaction** (the body attacks itself by mistake). This reaction destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin, called beta cells. This process can go on for months before any symptoms appear.

What symptoms do children with diabetes exhibit?

Like adults, a number of symptoms may give early warning that diabetes has developed.

One or more of the following symptoms may be associated with diabetes:

- Thirst
- Tiredness
- Weight loss
- Frequent urination

Amongst children, specific symptoms may include stomach aches, headaches and behavioural problems.

Recurrent tummy pains and an unexplainable history of illness should be treated as possible heralds of diabetes.

Visit your GP as soon as possible if you experience the main symptoms of diabetes.