The aim of the specialist dietitians in diabetes is to improve the quality of life and the knowledge of people with diabetes.

The development of specialist diabetes dietitian roles have made major contributions and improved standards of care to patients.

Well controlled diabetes is achieved by managing diet, lifestyle and medications effectively. Dietitians play a key role in making nutrition information accessible and practical.

Evidence-based research strongly suggests that diet therapy provided by a registered dietitian who is experienced in the management of diabetes is clinically effective. (1)

The number of people with diabetes has doubled in the past 20 years. In 2014 3.8million people were said to have the condition. The NHS currently spends 10 per cent of its annual budget on diabetes care. That equates to £1 million an hour. (2)

Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes are serious conditions. They have a huge impact on each diagnosed person, and their families. Diabetes requires careful management every single day for the rest of their lives. People with diabetes are at an increased risk of:

- heart disease, lower limb amputation, stroke and blindness
- reduced life expectancy – diabetes can lead to a 6 to 14 year reduction in average life expectancy.
Case Study
A patient with type 1 diabetes was referred for weight loss advice in addition to seeking support to help her improve her diabetes control. A detailed assessment by the dietitian revealed that the patient was having regular hypoglycaemia (low blood sugars), inconsistent with her carbohydrate intake, had no regular exercise and rarely changed the insulin needles on her insulin pens.

With the support and educational input from the specialist diabetes dietitian, the patient was able to understand the mode of action of her insulin, was taught how to count carbohydrates and to titrate her insulin dose according to her carbohydrate intake and advised to use a new needle for each injection. The result was an improvement in her self-management skill, quality of life and reduced cost burden to the NHS. Her blood glucose levels had improved and she had lost weight. She was suffering less hypoglycaemic events and had reduced her insulin doses.

Innovative services
In 2013 the BDA Diabetes Specialist Group wrote an education programme for GPs and practice nurses that could be delivered in class or online to help achieve Quality of Outcomes Framework points.

A service in Wales set up a 2 hour dietary group education programme for newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes patients instead of giving individual appointments. This improved cost effectiveness for the service and reduced patient waiting times.

References

The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation’s largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 8,000 members. The BDA is also an active trade union. To find out more about other areas of work that dietitians are involved in please visit:

www.bda.uk.com

“Being a diabetes specialist dietitian is very rewarding, as we continually get feedback from our patients that we have empowered them to match their insulin and carbohydrate, giving them flexibility in food choice and good glucose control”

Sian, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

Try our:
Food Fact Sheets: these give information about foods and also about medical conditions - available on the website.

Why not follow the BDA:
@BrDieteticAssoc
BritishDieteticAssociation