

Updated information on diabetes treatment in New Zealand

This is a summary of a recent update to the [diabetes domain of the Atlas of Healthcare Variation](#).

If you have diabetes and are concerned about it or would like to understand more about the medicine you are taking to manage it, please contact your GP.

About the diabetes Atlas domain

The Atlas is an online tool showing differences in the type and quality of health care people receive in different district health board (DHB) regions. It is published by the Health Quality & Safety Commission.

The diabetes Atlas domain includes information about:

- how common diabetes is
- whether certain groups of people (different ethnic or age groups and genders) are more likely to have diabetes
- how diabetes differs across regions
- how diabetes is treated.

The diabetes Atlas domain combines information about people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. It was not possible to reliably split up these two groups.

What the Atlas shows

The number of people identified as having diabetes continues to rise. There are several areas of high variation across DHBs:

- Some DHBs had more than twice as many people with diabetes than others, for example, the number of people with diabetes aged 65–74 years varied between 9 percent and 27 percent of a DHB population.
- The number of people with diabetes who regularly use medicines (insulin or metformin), to manage their blood glucose (sugar) levels ranged from 49 percent to 67 percent of people with diabetes aged 25 years and over.
- The number of days people with diabetes occupied a hospital bed (called 'bed-days') for any reason ranged between 15 percent and 26 percent of all hospital bed-days.

An area of low variation between DHBs was the number of people who had to have amputations (limb removal) because of their diabetes.

Questions raised by diabetes treatment variation

- Does the rising number of people with diabetes mean DHBs need to work harder to manage the condition in the community?

- Would more people with diabetes benefit from better control of their blood glucose levels?
- Why is the rate of hospital bed occupancy so varied across DHBs? Can some DHBs lower their admission rates and length of stay for people with diabetes?
- Why is there variation by DHB in rates for checking for complications?

About diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where the levels of glucose in the blood are too high.

There are two main types of diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes is when your body has stopped producing insulin.

- People with type 1 diabetes need to inject insulin to live.
- Type 1 diabetes is most often diagnosed in children and young adults.
- Type 1 diabetes is less common than type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is when your cells have become insulin-resistant or your body doesn't produce enough insulin to keep you healthy. Type 2 diabetes usually develops in adults, but it is becoming more common in adolescents.

More information

About diabetes:

- www.diabetes.org.nz/home
- www.healthmentoronline.com/
- www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/d/diabetes-overview/

About the diabetes Atlas domain:

- www.hqsc.govt.nz/Atlas/diabetes