

Diabetes mellitus and the life-threatening late complications of cardiovascular disease

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Between 600,000 and 800,000 Austrians have diabetes mellitus. This "sugar disease", as it is known, can itself already be treated very effectively. The later consequences of diabetes, however, which mostly affect the blood vessels and cause cardiovascular conditions such as myocardial infarctions or strokes, are more likely to be fatal. Diabetes expert Michael Resl from the University Department of Internal Medicine III at the MedUni Vienna, on the occasion of World Diabetes Day on 14th November, is keen to draw people's attention to this threat.

Cardiovascular diseases are the most common cause of death in patients

with diabetes mellitus. The blood vessels of patients with [type 2 diabetes mellitus](#) are 15 years "older" than those of people who do not have the condition. And: the risk of [diabetic patients](#) suffering a heart attack is also just as high as people who have already had one. On average, a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus means a reduction in life expectancy of seven to eight years.

At the MedUni Vienna and in the Vienna General Hospital, there is a close, [interdisciplinary collaboration](#) between the departments of diabetology, cardiology and ophthalmology which ensures that patients are given the best possible interdisciplinary care. As well as projects that have been running for a long time, which have produced numerous publications in high-ranking journals, the recently initiated Vidinet cooperation (Vienna Diabetes Network) is also intended to further optimise interdisciplinary treatment pathways and the collaboration between the individual departments.

Says Resl: "We have biomarkers which we can use to better estimate the increased [risk of cardiovascular disease](#) in patients with diabetes mellitus and therefore treat it at an earlier stage." As well as the protein output in the urine (proteinuria), NT-proBNP, a hormone produced by the heart, is an excellent tool for estimating the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Taking treatment seriously lifelong

Willingness on the part of the patient to actively participate in their treatment – and to do so lifelong – is very important: "They need to understand the risks to their health, take them seriously and make lifestyle changes that continue for the rest of their lives." Modern treatment is multifactorial and includes lowering blood sugar levels, reducing blood pressure, treating raised cholesterol levels and reducing obesity through healthier eating.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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