

Isolation severely impacts diabetes management

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New research has found that patients' self-management of their diabetes has suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during periods of self-isolation.

A study led by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), published in the journal *Diabetology and Metabolic Syndrome*, surveyed 679 adult patients between May and November 2020 and found that self-[isolation](#) was associated with greater fluctuations of blood glucose levels, reduced access to a healthy diet and reduced access to medicines. The survey included people with any type of diabetes.

The need to self-isolate due to COVID-19 infection was found to be the single most important factor influencing variables investigated during the study. The likelihood of fluctuations in blood glucose levels was found to be 1.8 times higher among those who needed to self-isolate than in those who did not. A total of 35.6% of respondents reported that their blood glucose levels fluctuated more during the COVID-19 pandemic than in the period before.

In addition, 13.8% of participants reported that their access to medicines had worsened during the pandemic. The likelihood of access to medicine being worse in those needing to isolate was 1.9 times higher than in those who did not. Patients on insulin treatment were over twice as likely to have reduced access to diabetes medicine compared to those who were not on insulin treatment.

Fluctuations in blood [glucose levels](#) among diabetics can lead to damage to the eyes and other organs.

Lead author Professor Shahina Pardhan, Director of the Vision and Eye Research Institute at ARU, said, "People with diabetes are at a greater risk of serious complications from COVID-19. Self-management of diabetes is therefore of paramount importance, and we wanted to compare people's self-management before and during the pandemic.

"We found a concerning association between self-isolation and [blood](#) sugar fluctuations, reduced access to medicines, lower levels of physical

activity and a less healthy diet. All these elements are crucial to successful self-management of diabetes.

"Given that access to health services was limited during the pandemic, it is of vital importance that people are able to self-manage their condition.

"Public health policies should give priority to those people with diabetes who need to isolate during the [pandemic](#) and also those who have diabetes complications in order to ensure that they are able to manage their [diabetes](#) appropriately at this time."

Patients surveyed were from the UK, Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

More information: Shahina Pardhan et al, Self-isolation negatively impacts self-management of diabetes during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, *Diabetology & Metabolic Syndrome* (2021). [DOI: 10.1186/s13098-021-00734-4](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13098-021-00734-4)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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