Your guide to...
Understanding type 3c diabetes

This resource is part of Guts UK's Kranky Panky campaign, designed to help you understand type 3c diabetes.

For the body to function well, it needs to keep the level of glucose, a sugar within our blood, within a certain range. When it cannot keep it in this range, it is called diabetes.

What is type 3c diabetes?

Type 3c diabetes is caused by damage to the pancreas. Many people have heard about type 1 and type 2 diabetes but are less familiar with type 3c. Most people in the UK with diabetes have type 2.

There are cases where people with type 3c may be mistakenly told they have type 2, when the cause of their diabetes is damage to the pancreas. They may also experience difficulty in managing blood glucose levels. Different types of diabetes are different conditions, so must be treated differently.

What are the symptoms?

- Unintentional weight loss.
- Peeing more often than usual, especially at night.
- Tiredness.
- Blurred vision.
- Feeling lightheaded.
- Having palpitations.
- Sweating when not hot.
- Craving sugary drinks and food.
- Slow healing of wounds or a fungal infection called thrush.

The symptoms of type 3c diabetes can be caused by high blood glucose levels because the pancreas isn't making enough insulin to move glucose into cells. Also, because type 3c diabetes affects glucagon as well, managing both high and low blood glucose levels can be tricky.

It's important to talk to your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms.



What are the causes?

Type 3c diabetes is caused by damage to the pancreas, including from:

- **Chronic pancreatitis**

Up to 20 years after developing symptoms of chronic pancreatitis, 8 out of 10 people will develop diabetes. Chronic pancreatitis leads to three-quarters of type 3c diabetes cases in the UK.

- **Recurrent acute pancreatitis**

Occurs in both adults and children. In children with recurrent acute or chronic pancreatitis, between 6 and 9 in 100 may develop diabetes.

- **Severe acute pancreatitis**

Pancreatic necrosis, in which inflammation causes parts of the pancreas to lose blood supply and die, can lead to diabetes in many people.

- **Trauma-related pancreatitis**

Over 1 in 3 people with trauma-related pancreatitis develop diabetes, sometimes after leaving the hospital.

- **Pancreatic surgery**

Removing part of the pancreas causes diabetes in 1 in 4 people. Total removal of the pancreas (total pancreatectomy) leads to type 3c diabetes in everyone who has this surgery.

- **Haemochromatosis**

An inherited condition causing iron to build up in the body and damage the pancreas.

- **Other causes include:**

Pancreatic cancer and cystic fibrosis. The charities Pancreatic Cancer UK and Cystic Fibrosis Trust can provide specific information about these conditions and how to manage type 3c diabetes.

How does the pancreas help with blood sugar?

Your pancreas helps the body in two main ways: digestion and hormones.

When it comes to hormones, it produces these messengers to help keep your blood sugar at the right level. These hormones are insulin and glucagon. Insulin helps move glucose from the blood into body cells, where it is used for energy or stored. Glucagon helps the body release more glucose from body stores when the level in the blood is low.



What happens if you don't produce enough insulin?

Type 3c diabetes usually occurs with pancreatic exocrine insufficiency (PEI). This is where the pancreas is damaged so it cannot make enough enzymes for food to be fully broken down. Type 3c diabetes also impacts all the hormones made in the pancreas. As a result of this, standard dietary advice for type 2 diabetes, such as limiting diet and aiming to reduce weight, may not apply to some people with pancreatitis, especially those who have a low body weight or find it hard to eat. Some people may have a combination of both type 2 and type 3c diabetes, particularly those living with a higher body weight or with a family history of diabetes.

Want to know more about type 3c diabetes?

Our new, accredited information on type 3c diabetes can be found at: gutscharity.org.uk/info/type-3c-diabetes.

It includes more on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatments, support and questions to ask your doctor.



Learn more and take action

Guts UK is the only UK charity funding a research fellowship into pancreatitis.
Our digestive systems have been underfunded and misunderstood for decades. We're here to change that.

Download resources

Head to gutscharity.org.uk/kranky-panky to download our free, reliable resources and learn more about pancreatitis.

Join us on socials

Search @gutscharityuk on social media to join the #KrankyPanky campaign.

Support our work

Donate today at gutscharity.org.uk/donate to help improve the lives of millions affected by digestive conditions and symptoms like pancreatitis.

Need more information on your digestive condition or symptoms?
Guts UK is the national charity for the digestive system. For information and guidance, go to **gutscharity.org.uk/information.**

Need support? Contact our Helpline on 0300 102 4887 or gutscharity.org.uk/helpline.

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