

# EXPERIENCES OF TYPE 2 DIABETES AND DIABETES CARE IN YOUNG WOMEN WITH REPRODUCTIVE AGE

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## Background

The prevalence, and negative health impacts, of women living with diabetes during their reproductive years is increasing, accounting for more than 60 million women worldwide. There is little research on their experiences and health needs.

## Aim

To explore the experiences and views of women with type 2 diabetes (T2DM) during their reproductive years to improve their health and wellbeing.

## Method

The study was designed using a qualitative approach, and participants were 36 women with T2DM (age range=20-45 years, median diabetes duration=4.5 years) recruited from the United Kingdom and Turkey through social media and charities. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews conducted via video call (n=27), phone (n=1) and email (n=8). The transcribed data were analysed thematically using Framework Analysis.

## Result

Two overarching themes identifying the women's experiences with T2DM are: self-identity as a young woman; and diabetes care is not orientated to younger women's health needs. Living with diabetes was perceived as a major disruptor to their self and identity in their reproductive years. They described feelings of negative self-perceptions considering themselves '*too young*' for diabetes, resulting in nondisclosure of their condition and loneliness. Living with diabetes negatively affected fertility beliefs and pregnancy plans related to anxiety and fear for their future baby. To cope with these emotional concerns, the disordered eating behaviours were present throughout many women. There was a strong view regarding the lack of attention to women's individual needs in diabetes care provided. The interactions between women and healthcare providers were perceived as unhelpful in relation to their age and gender.

## Conclusion

This study identified many psychosocial issues associated with living with T2DM at early phase of life. Healthcare delivery may need to be reorientated to improve the women's healthcare experiences. Future research is required to explore the prevalence and impact of these health issues on this population.