



Plain Language Summary

A review of the clinical and cost effectiveness evidence for a digital type 2 diabetes remission programme in Scotland

SHTG Assessment | June 2023

What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood to be too high. This happens either when the pancreas does not produce enough of a hormone called insulin, or when the body's cells do not react to insulin. Type 2 diabetes is often linked to being overweight or having an inactive lifestyle, or having a family history of the disease.

Diabetes is usually a lifelong condition which can affect a person's everyday life. It can cause symptoms such as excessive thirst, needing to go to the toilet regularly, and tiredness. It can also increase a person's risk of serious health problems with their eyes, heart and nerves.

Treatment for type 2 diabetes includes medication and making changes to diet and activity levels to help control blood sugar levels. Early in the course of type 2 diabetes, planned weight loss can reverse the disease.

What is the digital type 2 diabetes remission programme?

It is a diet-based programme which people with type 2 diabetes can follow to help them lose weight and control their blood sugar levels without taking any medication. The entire programme is delivered online through the use of video conferencing and an online platform or mobile app to access support and monitor progress.

When blood sugar levels drop to a healthy level for a sustained period of time, a person's diabetes is said to be in remission.

During the first stage of the programme, people replace their usual diet with liquid shakes and soups. Regular food is reintroduced into their diet in the second stage of the programme. The third and final stage of the programme involves ongoing support to maintain weight loss.

Why is this important?

The number of people being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes is increasing every year. Having type 2 diabetes increases a person's risk of developing serious illnesses such as heart disease. This affects a person's quality of life and also places demands on the NHS for treatments. Achieving diabetes remission means that people become less likely to develop serious illnesses and experience a greater quality of life.

What we did

We looked for evidence on the effectiveness of diabetes remission programmes which used apps and videoconferencing but did not require attending any in-person appointments.

What we found

We did not find any published evidence on the use of a digital diabetes remission programme, because these are still being trialed.

We did find studies showing that remission programmes requiring in-person attendance were effective and offered good value for money. Early results from digital programme trials have shown that they are at least as effective as in-person programmes in helping people lose weight and achieve remission.

We also found evidence to show that remote and digitally delivered programmes for diabetes prevention, which also focused on weight loss, were more effective than in-person programmes.

What is our conclusion?

We do not know for sure whether delivering a diabetes remission programme in-person or through videoconferencing and mobile apps is more effective, but early results from trials currently in progress suggest that both digital and in-person programmes can lead to similar levels of weight loss and remission.

What next?

This report will be shared with the Accelerated National Innovation Adoption collaborative to inform their value case for implementing a national diabetes remission service.

This plain language summary has been produced based on SHTG Assessment of the clinical and cost effectiveness of a digital type 2 diabetes remission programme. June 2023