

Combe Grove Type 1 Diabetes Programme; Confidence with Insulin Across All Roots of Health

Q and A

Why does this course differ from the accepted way of managing type 1 diabetes?

Overall, the practical method of managing your diabetes will be familiar. The most significant difference is the diet. We are teaching about the ketogenic diet and giving you the information on why this makes sense for managing type 1 diabetes. We are also going to discuss in detail how physical activity, our environment, and sleep have an impact on type 1 diabetes. It is, in our view, the most logical solution to date and is based on sound principles.

I have complications of diabetes; does this matter?

It can do. However, we are careful to take the time to find out precisely the nature of your complication and whether the course will work well for you. We have a list of conditions that might make your participation in this type less safe than we and you would like. However, based on our research, we think that we can include 90% of people living with type 1 diabetes. We will, of course, be in touch if we feel we need to delve into further detail on your condition. It is just that some complications might temporarily worsen with dietary change, and need to be managed over a longer period of time in a more suitable environment that is clinically orientated.

The course content is very detailed. Will I be able to cope?

We have designed the course to focus each day on a particular root of health. There will also be some course content with content that goes into detail about biological processes. It might sound intimidating, but we are experienced in getting this information across so that you will have a good working knowledge of the biological processes that matter in managing type 1 diabetes. We will take time to ensure that you are up to the level we think you need to be to get the best out of the course. You will be surprised how easy this all is. After all, you spend 24/7 managing your condition, and the course content will make sense to you based on your experience.

You say that this is a practical course. I am concerned I might not want to go at the group's pace.

We understand this. We view everyone's condition as unique to them. There is information that will be highly practical to deploy, but we do not intend that the group all do the same thing. Someone with type 1 for a year, for example, will have different requirements than someone who has had it for 30 years. Some will want to go fast, and others will want to go more slowly. There is no right answer as we are all individuals. We suggest practical ways of applying the theory, but we are not expecting anyone to go beyond what they are prepared to do. If you want to practice at home after the course, that is entirely acceptable. You will have support from us for a year from the end of the course. It is your week to enjoy, relax, and feel confident at the end that you have the tools to have full control of your condition.

Why is this at a health resort and not a more clinical setting?

We have deliberately designed the course to focus on health and not disease. Most people spend a couple of hours per year in a clinical setting, and the rest of the time, they are left to their devices. Hospitals are great places to check for complications, but they don't have the resources to teach insulin management to the level we think is required. You will understand how to use your insulin as a tool in managing all of the roots of health and feel confident to increase or decrease the dose to optimise your control. Having this level of confidence will free you to get on with life without having to worry about sugar control constantly.

I need to know more about the meals you offer.

The type 1 programme follows the principles of a very low carbohydrate diet often called a ketogenic diet. We provide food based on this way of eating. But we do understand that many of our clients will be used to a more conventional approach which is higher in carbohydrates. We also offer insights as to how timing of meals can make a difference to glucose control. So, in this course we will provide two meals per day. They will be based around the principles of what we are teaching but there will also be carbohydrates on offer. This might be more important and less daunting in the first few days of the course. We do not think that snacking is part of this lifestyle but feel free to bring your own snacks if this is what you want to do. Of course, managing a hypo is a vital part of type 1 management and there are obviously no limits on eating for this. However, we do think that glucose is the most effective form of hypo management. There is a café where you will be able to top up your diet if you so choose. But we think that as the course progresses that you will understand the principles of our food plan and be confident in applying it, either here at Combe Grove or at a time of your choosing.

What if I fall ill whilst on the course?

There is a doctor available on site for the duration of your stay. They can deal with emergencies and diabetes-related problems. The staff at Combe Grove are also trained to spot potential diabetes-related issues. However, please be aware that we can only provide supportive first aid and will rely on the NHS to provide the appropriate care if you need it. If you are coming from abroad, please ensure that you have made provision for emergency medical care. Your risk of acute diabetes-related issues is no greater and statistically less than usual care. We have many people with type 1 diabetes attending our leisure and therapy facilities, and the vast majority have no problems as you would expect.

Will you inform my usual diabetes specialist?

We think it is part of good care to inform your GP or specialist that you have signed up for the course. We will be giving you support but are not able to arrange lifelong clinical reviews. So, we feel it is necessary that your clinical team has information about what we are providing. We intend to provide them only with information about the course content and what we do. We do our own health screening ahead of the start of the course to be sure that you will be able to attend, so we would not expect your specialist to highlight any concerns. If you have any concerns in this area, please let us know. Our vision is that type 1 diabetes care will be collaborative with your specialist, and you will certainly be well prepared to contribute fully to that exercise. Top-down care has a place, but we believe that the nature of type 1 diabetes management favours a collaborative approach.

Will you keep records of my stay?

Yes, we will record only the information we think is necessary, and you will have full access to the record. We hope that you will be able to help our research by uploading the results of the tests that you regularly have because of your condition. We intend to provide you with a summary of your learning and progress. It will be something you will find useful to share with your own clinical teams.

What do I need to bring?

We are teaching about optimising insulin use using your current insulin and monitoring devices. Bring all of your usual diabetes delivery and monitoring equipment including sharps bins, needles etc. You will also need to be able to test for glucose and ketones. There are many types of insulin and delivery devices and monitoring equipment. We will not be advising on equipment, recommending brands or comparing devices in this course. Whatever you have will be okay. Make sure you have enough ketone testing strips for three tests a day. If you run out of diabetes supplies or other medication whilst with us, we cannot provide these on-site, but of course, we can put you in touch with the local NHS teams, who will be able to help.

Are there any exclusions regarding equipment?

We cannot take people who do not have continuous glucose meters or are on mixed insulin. Ketogenic diets and insulin management, in general, are safer and easier to manage with non-mixed insulin and continuous monitoring of glucose.

Can I bring my family/partner/friend/carer?

Yes. Of course. They will be able to join at a special rate and have access to all of the facilities at Combe Grove.