

# Diabetics may lose free blood monitors

By Sam Lister

THE long-term health of Britain's diabetics is being put at risk by plans to cut millions from the budget for purchasing essential equipment for monitoring blood glucose, experts say.

The blood monitors, which are used by many of the country's 2.1 million diabetics, are essential for patients to manage their condition and its associated health complica-

tions. But charities said yesterday that diabetics may be denied free access to the equipment after a government consultation on funding.

Diabetes UK said the move could increase long-term health risks if diabetics are unable to control their blood sugar levels properly. The levels are tested by putting a drop of blood on a sensor.

The British In Vitro Diagnostics Association, which represents manufacturers and dis-

tributors, said that the proposal could mean diabetics having to pay for the equipment instead of getting it on the NHS.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said that the consultation was continuing, "The department's objective is to ensure that the NHS and taxpayers receive value for money on these products, while making sure that there is no adverse affect on either patient choice or patient

care," she said. The association puts the proposed cut at £19 million. Doris-Ann Williams, the organisation's director-general, said that the plans were "disastrous".

The association said the industry had been given until June 6 to respond to the consultation, with cuts starting on August 1. "Prices for these meters range from £15 to £150 and it will be the most vulnerable patients that end up paying the highest cost."

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