

Divers given green light - ADS releases new position statement on diabetes and diving

The Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) has published a new position statement on diving for people with insulin-requiring diabetes.

ADS CEO, Professor Sof Andrikopoulos said people with well-controlled diabetes are able to participate safely in recreational diving.

“The ADS recognises that with appropriate preparation, experience and adherence to the new recommendations, people with diabetes are able to dive safely,” he said.

However, the ADS still warns that diving should not be undertaken by people with hypoglycaemia unawareness, recent severe hypoglycaemia, or complications.

“Recreational diving places greater demands on the body; in particular on the cardiovascular, respiratory and metabolic systems,” said Prof Andrikopoulos.

“Any sudden and unexpected alteration in consciousness due to hypoglycaemia can be extremely dangerous or fatal to a diver and their dive partner.”

The new position statement provides healthcare professionals with criteria to assist them in determining a person’s suitability to dive and protocols to ensure they dive safely.

Diabetes specialists and General Practitioners are encouraged to be aware that divers are required to undergo initial and annual medical review by their treating physician and assessment by a doctor who has completed a post-graduate diving examiner’s qualification.

In 2015, the ADS commissioned a working group including diving enthusiasts, clinical and research experts, and representatives from the Telethon Type 1 Diabetes Family Centre in Perth and the South Pacific Underwater Medicine Society.

The group reviewed and revised the ADS position statement on scuba diving in people with diabetes. The new position statement is specific to recreational diving and is targeted at people with insulin-requiring (both type 1 and type 2) diabetes.

Bec Johnson, CEO of the Telethon Type 1 Diabetes Family Centre, has had type 1 diabetes since the age of 17 and qualified as a PADI Divemaster overseas in 2008. She has undertaken more than 500 safe dives and welcomes the new position statement.

“This is a real game-changer for divers. Australians with insulin-dependent diabetes can now participate in this exciting sport.

“People with diabetes can certainly learn to dive safely and we commend the Australian Diabetes Society for giving divers the go-ahead,” she said.

A copy of the new position statement, 'Insulin-requiring diabetes and recreational diving' can be downloaded from the ADS website at <https://diabetessociety.com.au/position-statements.asp>

For more information about the ADS position statement, please contact Nikki Wallis via email at comms@diabetessociety.com.au

About the Australian Diabetes Society (ADS)

The Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) is the peak medical and scientific body in Australia for diabetes. ADS is a national organisation founded in 1973. The ADS is a membership-based organisation consisting of predominantly endocrinologists, basic science researchers and health administration members. It is administered by a Board of Directors elected from membership, who take on this role in an honorary capacity. The main aim of ADS is to enhance the welfare of individuals with diabetes mellitus through improved knowledge and understanding, the production of management guidelines, training of health professionals and support for diabetes research.