

# Simple gut operation found to cure or control diabetes

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By Leon Watson

A SIMPLE operation in which a plastic film is inserted into the stomach can cure or control diabetes, doctors have found.

Patients taking part in trials at King's College Hospital and University College Hospital in London and City Hospital in Birmingham found their diabetes disappeared or became much milder after the operation.

Francesco Rubino, professor of metabolic surgery at King's, told *The Sunday Times*: "About 50 per cent of patients are diabetes-free after these procedures.

"The remaining people demonstrate big improvements of blood sugar control and can drastically reduce their dependence on insulin or other medication.

"In many patients, blood sugar levels go back to normal within days, long before declines in fat levels or weight."

The treatments stem from a new

view of the causes of diabetes, a condition in which there is too much glucose in the blood.

Diabetes has previously been blamed on the pancreas not secreting enough insulin, the hormone that controls glucose levels. However, Mr Rubino and his colleagues believe that the gut is the key player.

Andrea Midmer, 59, a nurse, took part in the trial. A plastic liner or "endo-barrier" was fitted into her stomach to stop the walls of her upper gut coming into contact with the food she ate.

"The effect was immediate," said Ms Midmer, who weighed 20 stone and was on insulin when the trial started.

"I stopped feeling hungry, I ate much smaller meals and I lost four-and-a-half stone."

Type 2 diabetes, which is often linked to obesity, is one of Britain's biggest health problems and affects about four million people.

Treatment costs £10 billion a year - about 10 per cent of the NHS budget.