



life with Diabetes

JUVENILE DIABETES RESEARCH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

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TOPICS IN TYPE 1 DIABETES Back to School: Strategies for Success

A sense of belonging is important to all of us. And for children, being part of a team is an especially important and stabilizing force. In school, having membership in a group will influence their healthy development and well-being. Students with type 1 diabetes are part of another team as well, and unfortunately it might not be one "recognized" by the school. Making the school experience a positive and inclusive one will require careful planning and follow-through. Our "Back to School" feature offers some practical advice on developing a good health care plan that will allow your child to manage his or her diabetes while acquiring skills to deal with its physical and emotional issues. In "Tips for the College-Bound Student with Diabetes," Life With Diabetes columnist Allison Blass offers a few suggestions that have served her well in beginning the college experience with confidence.

Team spirit is a big part of every student's school life. Whether on the debate team or the soccer team, acting in the school play or making teams of their own (fans of superheroes, clubhouse, or gymnastics), being a part of a group is important to a young person's self identity.

Students with type 1 diabetes are part of another team as well, and unfortunately it might not be one "recognized" by the school. Rather than leaving their children feeling like they're on a team of one, however, there are many things parents can do to build a team that will prevent their children from feeling alone while managing their diabetes in school.

Your child's team is made up of a variety of school staff – teachers, principal, school nurse, coaches, and counselors, even the bus driver and lunchroom monitor. But the team can also include classmates and maybe even other students with diabetes.

About 1 in 500 young people has type 1 diabetes. That means that, depending on the size of the school, your child may be the only student with the disease, or there may be several others. It's important to ensure that monitoring his or her condition doesn't make your child feel alone, isolated, or ashamed. At the same time, schools might not have much experience with children with diabetes. So seeing to it that that school staff is aware of special needs—checking blood sugar levels, administering insulin and having snacks as needed—is an important part of a young person's emotional well-being at school, and crucial to his or her physical well-being as well. Written, detailed plans for your child's care should be provided

and discussed with school staff. Every school is required to follow a protocol, known as a "Section 504" plan, by federal law. A sample plan can be seen at www.jdrf.org/diabetesinschool.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE.](#)

ASK A TEEN Help from JDRF's Online Diabetes Support Team

Growing up with a sibling who has diabetes can be difficult. It can lend to a child feeling burdened by the extra responsibility of caring for their siblings or resentful of the extra attention their brother or sister with diabetes is getting. But through this experience they can also be enriched by early lessons in compassion and familial love. In this issue, JDRF volunteer Jackie, 17, shares her insights about making the most of living with the disease in the family.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE.](#)

WHAT'S NEW ON THE JDRF WEBSITE?

If you have a child with type 1 diabetes between the ages 4 and 17 and you'd like to help find a cure, we want you! JDRF is accepting applications for Children's Congress 2007 from now until October 5, 2006. The selected delegates will join hundreds of other kids in Washington, D.C., from June 17-20, 2007, where they'll tell every member of Congress and the administration what their lives are like and ask them to support funding for a cure. To fill out an application, go to www.jdrf.org/cc07.

WHAT A JDRF CHAPTER CAN DO FOR YOU Guidance and Support

JDRF chapters offer a wide range of support services for families dealing with a new diagnosis. For example, JDRF's Austin (TX) Chapter's Parent Support Network meets every Tuesday night, "come as needed or desired." The chapter also offers a school support program, an online volunteer-run program enabling parents to engage in conversations about common problems, and a teen group featuring social activities, networking, and shared experiences. What's more, the chapter's Teen Ambassador meets with newly diagnosed families to extend support. Go to the JDRF website at www.jdrf.org to find events at a chapter near you.

You can let us know what you think of *Life with Diabetes* or subscribe today by sending an e-mail to info@jdrf.org. In subscription request, Please include **SUBSCRIBE LIFE WITH DIABETES** in the subject line.

The JDRF Online Diabetes Support Team can also provide assistance in charting a course for care. A thorough plan spells out the daily and emergency needs of your child, including:

- How often he or she should test blood sugars, and special circumstances that might require testing;
- How insulin is administered and what your child is able to do without help;
- The sorts of snacks that are allowed and the times that are appropriate for them;
- Symptoms of hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar, and ketones, and what school staff should do.

The plan might also include information such as the date your child was diagnosed, and an overview of his or her current health status. It should be updated with each new school year, be signed by the teacher and principal or nurse, and be discussed at another meeting with school personnel at the beginning of each term.

Because diabetes is not as common in schools as you might think, it's important to make certain that teachers are made aware of how high and low blood sugar can affect a student's performance. Rather than viewing irritability or sleepiness during class as a symptom of a "problem student," the teacher should be aware of possible causes. High blood sugars can cause frequent urination, and low blood sugars require a snack and frequent

testing. Checking blood sugar levels – especially before a field trip or a test – can help the student's academic performance and classroom behavior. Alternate times for tests should be allowed if a student is experiencing hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia. A private place where a student can easily go to check blood sugar should also be made available.

While it's a good idea to make sure your child's backpack includes snacks as well as necessary monitoring and equipment

for administering insulin, extra snacks and insulin can also be kept in the classroom and with the school nurse. Emergency phone numbers should also be given to all faculty responsible for student's well-being during the day.

The school nurse will likely be the point person in case of an emergency, and your child will feel more comfortable with that arrangement if they already know the nurse. With the consent of the parents and students, a nurse or counselor might arrange a "get acquainted" meeting with the student, or even a single meeting with all students living with diabetes if there's more than one in the school. Creating an informal "buddy system" can give a young person a peer to talk to, or create a mentor relationship, and make them feel less isolated.

Young people with diabetes should not be excluded from or asked to sit out of any activities. Physical activity is important to all children, but especially those with diabetes, so they should be involved in all regular physical education course activities. And field trips are a big part of the educational experience, not just supplementing regular coursework but providing a fun break from the classroom. With a little attention and advance planning, there's no reason that the child with diabetes can't be involved in all of the activities other students partake in.

Ultimately, the school is a place where students want to learn independence while not feeling separated from their classmates. A good health management plan will allow them to take ownership of their condition, learn to maintain their health without feeling stress, and gain the benefits of interacting with other students

HOW WILL YOU HANDLE IT?

School can bring up all kinds of diabetes questions. Even if you think you've covered all the bases in your diabetes plans, problems may still arise. The following are real situations that have happened to real kids. Ask your child how he or she would handle them.

- Do you want everyone in class to know that you have diabetes? Pro: If they understand, they can help you. Con: You might be treated differently.
- What will you do if a grown-up at school goes against your diabetes care plan, or does something dangerous, like doesn't let you test your blood sugar before running laps in gym class?
- What will you do if your blood sugar is too high during a test, and you can't concentrate?
- What will you say if someone makes an uninformed remark, such as, "You'll die if you eat that."?
- What will you do if candy is distributed and you or your parents haven't planned for it?

There are no right and wrong answers—but it helps to think about situations like these beforehand, and know where to turn for help. Some suggestions: your local JDRF chapter, or message boards like those at www.childrenwithdiabetes.com.

Portions of "Must Have Resources to Help" and "How Will You Handle it?" are taken from a special Back to School section in the fall issue of *Countdown for Kids*.

MUST-HAVE RESOURCES TO HELP

To help you get ready for school and teach your teachers, the National Diabetes Education Program offers a free booklet, "Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel."

The booklet describes diabetes and how it may affect kids, how school personnel should assist you, sample plan forms, and an overview of school responsibilities under federal laws. It also contains a handy section of checklists that detail everyone's responsibilities.

To obtain a copy, download it from <http://ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/catalog.htm>, or call 800-438-5383.

You may also order a School Information Kit from JDRF by calling 1-800-533-CURE or online at www.jdrf.org/diabetesinschool. Your parents can also see lots of tips from other parents on the JDRF website.

with diabetes. With an informed faculty and a good plan in place, your child won't just manage his or her diabetes, but will learn responsibility and acquire skills that will help him or her deal with the physical and emotional issues diabetes presents for years to come.

5 TIPS FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT WITH DIABETES

1. Visit the Student Health Center

Meet the staff of the health center. They are your best connection to staying healthy while away from your hometown doctor. Meet the nurses, meet the nutritionist, and meet with a doctor that you can call with questions. Put a business card on your desk bulletin board in case of emergencies. Meet with the school nurse or call your hometown educator at least once during the first term to discuss your new schedule and make adjustments for new eating and activity patterns.

2. Meet with Student Services.

No one with diabetes wants to have to deal with academic issues resulting from their disease, but low and high blood sugar sometimes can pose a challenge to test-taking. Meet before the semester begins with the student services staff to draft guidelines for how to deal with the unavoidable. Take into consideration rescheduling tests, allowing food to be eaten in class, and to excuse absences or tardiness because of blood sugar or ketone-related issues. Photocopy the letter from student services and give it to professors at the beginning of each term.

3. Talk with your roommate and your resident assistant.

If you go away to school, educate your roommate and resident assistant about diabetes. They are the people who will be around in cases of late-night low blood sugar when there is the most risk. Show them where the extra supplies are, show them how to use glucagon, show them where your glucose tabs and juice are. Explain why these things are important. As soon as you start making friends that you are comfortable with, find one or two friends and give them the low-down on diabetes to help during the day on campus.

4. Locate the nearest pharmacy.

Transfer all your prescriptions to the nearest pharmacy. Most campuses have one, but not all are open on weekends or in the evenings. If you don't have reliable transportation, make sure this pharmacy is within walking or biking distance – or delivers!

5. Purchase extra supplies.

Don't get caught off-guard: Buy lots of juice, glucose tabs and granola bars. Stock up on diabetes supplies and put them where they won't get messed with (in a box in a drawer or closet are ideal places). The glucagon should be easy to get to--a desk drawer or bookshelf is perfect, because you don't want to be searching for that during a stressful situation.

Allison is a 21-year-old senior at the University of Oregon who has had type 1 diabetes since the age of eight. She learned the importance of communication with the health center when she woke up with high ketones during her sophomore year.

ASK A TEEN

Help from JDRF's Online Diabetes Support Team

Q: My little sister was diagnosed in December, and now she's getting all the attention, and I'm really jealous. I'm 13 and really know better than that, and I know I need to be more mature, but I can't help it. HELP ME PLEASE!!!

A: I know what it means when siblings of kids with diabetes tell me, "I don't get enough attention." I have a twin sister, and for most of our lives—ever since she was diagnosed with type 1 when we were three—Mollie has needed 24/7/365 attention. There were times when it was hard, but, as we got older, I did two things to keep our situations in perspective. First, I decided that rather than sitting around feeling sorry for myself, I would try to make myself useful. I began learning everything I could about diabetes, because the more everyone in the family knew, the better Mollie could manage her diabetes, and the easier life became for her and for all of us. I began to understand and look out for her mood swings, how insulin works, why they need to test so often, how she felt when her blood glucose was high or low, and how to help her in an emergency. In knowing these things as though I had the disease, I gained a better understanding of how my sister felt, why she acted the way she did.

The second thing that always helps me to keep the "attention" issue in perspective is knowing that when my parents give Mollie extra attention, it's not because they love her more than me, but because if someone isn't paying close enough attention, there could be devastating results.

And the bottom line for me is, I can't imagine life without Mollie, as I am sure you could not imagine life without your little sister. Think about what would be missing if you came home from school or soccer or any important event in your life and she wasn't there to give you a hug and congratulate you. So rather than concentrating on the attention I'm not getting, I choose to be grateful that my parents are attentive and caring enough to teach my sister and help her, while being there for both of us always.

I'm not saying it isn't hard and that you don't wish that they showed you that kind of attention, but deep down, I hope you'll learn as I did that they love us both equally. And please don't feel bad about feeling envious. I've talked to a lot of siblings, and I've found that at one point or another we all go through this.

And then somewhere along the line, we all realize this is something we have to deal with. But remember that at any given time, it's always important that we as siblings know how to handle any given situation and then go on with our lives. Diabetes is a family disease, it doesn't just affect one of us. So now is your turn to be the big sister you always wanted to be, and it will only bring you closer with a little patience and a little love.

Jackie, 17, and her twin sister, Mollie, who has had type 1 diabetes for 14 years, are active JDRF volunteers.

Have a question? Go to the JDRF Online Diabetes Support Team at www.jdrf.org.