

## Children and Adolescents with Diabetes

# How Can You Help?

Diabetes (Types 1 and 2) is a serious disease that may affect children in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Diabetes can result in a buildup of sugar or *glucose*, which is the body's main source of fuel in the blood, and over time can cause damage to the eyes, kidneys, heart, nerves, and blood vessels. Persons with diabetes may require careful daily monitoring and management of blood glucose levels to prevent serious complications. Students who have diabetes need appropriate care in the school setting for their safety, well-being, and school performance.<sup>2,3</sup> Having abnormally high (hyperglycemia) or low glucose (hypoglycemia) levels can be life-threatening and require immediate attention by qualified health professionals. Schools should work with parents and health care providers to ensure a safe learning environment in which students with diabetes can fully participate in the school experience, while having their health needs met.

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support your child's school to address diabetes. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

### What's Happening at School?

1. Are there School Health Services, including a full-time registered nurse, in the school building at all times to help students with chronic medical conditions or with emergencies?
2. How does the school identify and share information about those students who have diabetes?
3. Is it required that each student with diabetes have a school diabetes medical management or emergency management plan?<sup>3</sup>
4. What are school policies for self-medication administration? Does the school allow students to carry their own medication, such as oral medicine or insulin, snacks, and glucose monitoring supplies at school? Can the student with diabetes test his or her glucose in school?
5. Does the cafeteria provide information about the nutritional content of meals, including carbohydrates, for diabetic students? If so, where can this information be found?
6. What are the school protocols for managing diabetes at school, on the school bus, on a field trip, or in cases of emergency or lockdown?
7. Are other school staff, such as teachers, bus drivers, and food services staff, trained to recognize and respond to hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemia (high blood sugar)?
8. What is the policy for student participation in physical activity (e.g., recess or classroom activity breaks) or physical education at school if he or she has diabetes?
9. Is there a bullying prevention policy in the school or district that discourages bullying or encourages awareness or anti-stigma of students with medical conditions?





## Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in addressing diabetes.

- Advocate for a full-time registered nurse in school.
- Have an ongoing conversation with your child to discuss their diabetes, their feelings about having diabetes, and if they feel safe and supported at school.<sup>5</sup>
- Work with your child's health care provider to establish a school diabetes medical management plan and the timely completion of required school forms.<sup>3</sup> Encourage communication between school health services and your child's health care provider.
- Provide medication, monitoring supplies, and snacks to the registered nurse or other school health official.
- Ensure that there is a current individualized health care plan, and assist with setting goals.<sup>4</sup>
- Keep your emergency contact information up-to-date with the teacher, school secretary, and registered nurse.
- Communicate with your child's teachers, counselors, school health services, and food services staff about your child's diabetes and any concerns about how they cope while at school.
- Volunteer with your child, or get involved at school health events to educate staff and other families about diabetes.
- Join a group, such as the PTA, school wellness committee, or school health advisory council, that addresses the needs of a supportive and healthy school environment.<sup>6</sup>
- Share research-based websites or written materials about diabetes with teachers, nurses, and administrators, when possible, (e.g., <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/DiabetesInSchool>).



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

## REFERENCES

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