



# DIABETES MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL

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- TIPS FOR TEACHERS
- SOLUTIONS FOR COMMON CONCERNS
- ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

Diabetes must be managed 24/7, and for children with diabetes that includes time spent at school or school activities like field trips and extracurricular activities. Our Health Unit works to make sure the diabetes management needs of children are met so they are healthy and safe and able to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers.

## Tips for teachers

- Learn as much as you can about diabetes. Knowledge is power. Become aware of essential diabetes care tasks and be prepared to respond in the event of a diabetes emergency. Your willingness to learn will help to ensure a safe classroom environment and optimize your student's success and participation.
- Every student with diabetes is different. Students may use different therapies to manage their diabetes. Some need help and some are independent. Learn about your student's diabetes and how you can best respond and support.
- Provide a supportive learning environment. It is important to provide a classroom environment that enables the student to have unrestricted access to needed care. Depending upon the student's level of independence, he or she should be allowed to self-manage their diabetes and should have unrestricted access to the school health unit.
- Always be prepared. A "low kit" containing food and other supplies to treat hypoglycemia should always be available in the classroom, the health unit and other areas of the school.
- Don't draw unnecessary attention to the student's condition. Your student may need to eat a snack in the classroom to treat hypoglycemia or monitor his or her blood glucose level and give insulin. The student should be allowed to do this without the necessity of leaving the classroom or drawing attention to the student.
- Provide information for substitute teachers. Information on the day-to-day needs of the student with diabetes and emergency information should be maintained in the substitute teacher's file.
- Notify parents and other supervisory school staff in advance of changes in schedule. Talk to the parents ahead of time about any special considerations and concerns about parties and special events. Let parents, the school health team and other school staff know about upcoming parties, field trips and special class events so that adjustments may be made to insulin dosages.
- Treat the student with diabetes the same as other students. Students with diabetes should be treated fairly and have the same access to all school opportunities as their peers.
- Communicate concerns to parents, school doctor, school nurse, or school administrator. Provide timely and clear communication of any concerns and questions to the parents, school doctor, school nurse or school administrator.

## Solutions for common concerns

### 1. Your student may ask to use the bathroom more often...

- **Explanation:** High blood sugar levels may cause increased urination.
- **Solution:** Allow your student to go whenever he asks.

### 2. Your student may suddenly act lethargic or confused, she may put her head down on the desk or complain about weakness...

- **Explanation:** This is a sign of low blood sugar.
- **Solution:** Make sure your student immediately consumes a quick acting form of carbohydrate (juice, regular soda, etc.). Send the student directly to the health unit. The student's parents are providing a supply that is stored in the health unit.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How frequently does a child with diabetes have to check their blood glucose?

- **Answer:** Students should check before eating snacks or meals, before physical activities, and whenever they have symptoms of high or low blood glucose. Many students also check before academic exams and tests. However, teachers should send students to the health unit 10 minutes before each break.

### 2. What do we do when we have a classroom party? Can my student eat what everybody else eats?

- **Answer:** Let parents know what will be served when you announce a party. Most often they can work typical party foods into the student's meal plan – even sweets!

### 3. Are students with diabetes allowed to eat cupcakes, cookies and other sweet treats and snacks?

- **Answer:** Yes. Students should consume meals and snacks in accordance with his or her individualized Diabetes Medical Management Plan. There are no forbidden foods for people with diabetes. However, all students should be encouraged to eat nutritious food.

### 4. Should students with diabetes be allowed to take an exam at a different time if his or her blood glucose levels are out of target range?

- **Answer:** Yes. Students who experience high or low blood glucose levels should not be penalized. Rather, the student should be allowed to take the exam another time just as a student with illness would be permitted to do.

### 5. Are students with diabetes subject to the same disciplinary rules as other students?

- **Answer:** Yes. However, if the student's misconduct is the result of diabetes, a student may not be disciplined.

### 6. Who provides care if the school doctor or nurse aren't available?

- **Answer:** All school staff having regular contact with a student with diabetes should be trained to recognize problems relating to diabetes and know who to contact when problems arise. A few school staff members should receive training in specific diabetes management tasks in order to assist students who cannot self-manage and to provide emergency care to any student with diabetes.

**7. Is it okay to require a parent to come to school to provide diabetes care for their child?**

- **Answer:** No. Schools have a legal obligation to provide these services to students with diabetes, and may not require a student's parent to assume this obligation.

**8. Must a school provide a trained school staff member while students participate in field trips and extracurricular activities?**

- **Answer:** Yes. Failure to provide this care would exclude students from these activities for safety reasons. Schools are required to provide needed care to ensure a student's full and safe participation in our school activities.

**9. What kind of modifications are usually provided by the school for the student with diabetes?**

- **Answer:** Some accommodations include, but are not limited to, allowing alternate times to take academic tests if blood glucose levels are significantly out of range; student access to supplies, equipment, medication, food, water, bathroom; opportunity to make up missed instruction and tests without penalty; assigned school staff to provide care on field trips and at all school-sponsored activities.