

The Student



Type 1 diabetes is an auto-immune disease in which the body's own defense systems attack the pancreas. Therefore, the student is not able to produce insulin. Since insulin is required to process carbohydrates into energy, the student is dependent on insulin delivered every day by injection or with an insulin pump. Any person, of any age, at any time may develop type 1 diabetes. No one knows why. You can't cure it, you can't catch it and you certainly can't prevent it. It is unable to be controlled with diet and exercise. Insulin is the only treatment.

Type 1 is a daily challenge. Many factors, other than food, impact their blood glucose levels: stress, activity, weather, illness, hormones and others. The same meal, given with the same insulin dose one day will not yield the same blood sugar the next.

This daily struggle can be frustrating. Every student will cope differently, and this will change over time. As the student grows and matures, the way they cope with their disease changes. As hard as it is to understand, students even sometimes will pretend they don't have diabetes. As adults who support them, it is important to recognize that they are not adults, no matter how mature they seem to be. The student with diabetes needs encouragement and support, as well as medical monitoring.

The Parent



Since blood sugar is affected by so many factors, the parents face challenges every day to best manage diabetes. The disease requires constant attention and can be overwhelming. The seriousness of raising a child with a life-threatening disease combined with sleepless nights and frustrations of managing blood sugar can combine together to make parents highly emotional.

Parents do not want their child defined by diabetes. They are KIDS who have diabetes, not diabetics who are kids. Parents want their kids to be happy, healthy and well adjusted. Every parent goes about this in a different way.

The School



Understanding the student and parent will help you to provide the best environment for a student with diabetes. Education and communication are the keys to a productive school arrangement.

The school can facilitate a productive arrangement by doing a few simple things:

Learn: Understand the basics of diabetes and how to fulfill your role in the student's diabetes care. It can be overwhelming, but you can be trained to manage the basics with your student. Remember, their parents are not medical professionals and they manage the disease every day. A basic training session can give all of the school staff the confidence to fulfill their role in diabetes care.

Listen: Listen to the parents and healthcare providers. They understand the specifics of the student's diabetes. Every child is very different. Parents and healthcare providers want to support you and will help you along as you need it.

Support: Support the student in any way that you can. You are responsible for many children, but do your best to pay attention to the student when you interact with them and let them know that you are available if they need support with their diabetes.

Bottom line... Work together to come up with a plan that works for your school and the student. Every school has different resources. You need to find a way to manage the student's health in a way that works for your school. When you have a question or concern – ask the parents, health care providers or seek out more education.
