

# What You Need To Know To Help A Student With Diabetes

## What is Diabetes?

- A chronic medical condition that affects how the body regulates blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Two Types:
  - Type 1 (T1D): pancreas produces little to no insulin<sup>1</sup>
  - Type 2 (T2D): body does not use insulin effectively<sup>1</sup>

**Insulin** is necessary for glucose (sugar) to enter the body for energy<sup>1</sup>



## Students With Diabetes May Require:

- Blood glucose monitoring
- Insulin injections or pump use
- Scheduled snacks/meals

## How Diabetes Affects Students in School

### Academic/Cognitive

- Blood glucose fluctuations can affect<sup>3</sup>:
  - Attention
  - Memory
  - Processing speed
  - Mood & behavior
- Hypoglycemia may cause<sup>1</sup>:
  - Confusion
  - Irritability
  - Dizziness
  - Difficulty concentrating
- Hyperglycemia may cause<sup>1</sup>:
  - Fatigue
  - Frequent bathroom use
  - Headaches
  - Reduced academic engagement

### Psychosocial

- Increased risk of<sup>5</sup>:
  - Anxiety & stress
  - Social stigma or feeling “different”
  - Missed instructional time

## Common Myths

1. Students with diabetes cannot eat sugar
2. Diabetes is caused by eating too much sugar
3. Students with diabetes should avoid physical activity
4. Checking blood sugar is disruptive or attention-seeking

Respect students' privacy & medical autonomy.

Avoid singling out the student during care routines.

Use inclusive language (e.g., "students with diabetes" not "diabetic child").



## The Facts

1. Students can eat balanced meals/snacks with proper insulin management<sup>1</sup>
2. T1D is a chronic condition, not caused by diet<sup>1</sup>
3. Physical activity is encouraged with proper monitoring & planning<sup>1</sup>
4. It is medically necessary to do so<sup>8</sup>

## Warning Signs

### Signs of Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)<sup>1</sup>

#### *Medical Emergency*

- Shaking
- Sweating
- Pale skin
- Confusion or unusual behavior
- Slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness

### Signs of Hyperglycemia (High Blood Sugar)<sup>1</sup>

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Blurry vision
- Nausea

***Always Follow The Student's Health Plan! Contact The School Nurse.***

# Practical Strategies

## Classroom Strategies<sup>8</sup>

- Allow unrestricted access to:
  - Water
  - Bathroom
  - Snacks
  - Glucose monitoring
- Permit flexible testing times if blood glucose is out of range
- Provide make-up work for medical-related absences
- Avoid penalizing medical-related tardiness

## Environmental Supports<sup>8</sup>

- Maintain predictable schedules for meals/snacks
- Allow & support participation in trips/physical activity with planning<sup>1</sup>

## Family Supports<sup>10</sup>

- Maintain regular communication with parents/guardians
- Collaborate with:
  - School nurse
  - School psychologist
  - 504/IEP team
- Respect cultural & family approaches to diabetes management
- Ensure confidentiality

## Health & Safety Supports<sup>8</sup>

- Know where emergency supplies are stored
- Learn the student's health plan regarding their diabetes treatment/support
- Never send a symptomatic student to the nurse alone

# National Resources

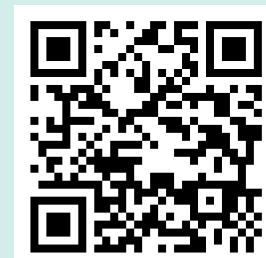
## *American Diabetes Association - Safe at School*

- Provides training materials for school personnel
- Legal advocacy for student rights
- School care plans & guidelines



## *Breakthrough T1D (formerly JDRF)*

- Education resources for school personnel
- Peer support & awareness programs
- Evidence-based guides for managing T1D in schools



## Resources

1. American Diabetes Association. 2. Classification and diagnosis of diabetes: Standards of Care in Diabetes-2024. Diabetes Care. 2024
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2023. US Department of Health and Human Services; 2023
3. McCarthy AM, Lindgren S, Mengeling MA, Tsalikian E, Engvall J. Cognitive functioning in children with type 1 diabetes. J Pediatr Psychol. 2016
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5. Young-Hyman D, de Groot M, Hill-Briggs F, Gonzalez JS, Hood K, Peyrot M. Psychosocial care for people with diabetes. Diabetes Care. 2016
6. American Diabetes Association. Safe at School® Campaign. Accessed February 2025. <https://diabetes.org>
7. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Diabetes in Children and Teens. National Institutes of Health; 2023.
8. American Diabetes Association. 15. Diabetes care in the school and day care setting: Standards of Care in Diabetes-2024. Diabetes Care. 2024
9. Jackson CC, Albanese-O'Neill A, Butler KL, et al. Diabetes care in the school setting: A position statement. J Sch Health. 2015
10. Nabors L, Troillett A, Nash T, Masiulis B. School nurse perceptions of supports for children with diabetes. J Sch Health. 2013
11. American Diabetes Association. Safe at School® legal protections and advocacy resources. Accessed February 2025. <https://diabetes.org>
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