

## WHEN A CHILD WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES STARTS SCHOOL

Children spend 30–35 hours at school every week. Children with diabetes, especially younger ones, may need help taking care of their diabetes at school. It is important to let school staff know about your child's diabetes. Your Diabetes Education Centre should arrange for a nurse from [Nursing Support Services](#) or the Community Health Unit to contact you and to help the school staff learn about diabetes. (See the handout [Nursing Support Services Referral Form](#) on our website.) Here is a list of things that you should do *before* your child goes back to school.

### Meet with the Principal and Your Child's Teacher:

- Find out if the school has had a student with type 1 diabetes before and if so, what is their policy for children with diabetes.
- Give the school a copy of the Canadian Diabetes Association's [Guidelines for the Care of Students Living with Diabetes at School](#). Find out what kind of supports are available at school to help with checking blood sugar, supervising lunch and snacks, treating low blood sugars, insulin administration or glucagon.
- Also give the school a copy of our BCCH handout [Diabetes Information for the School](#).
- Explain how type 1 diabetes might affect your child at school.
- Ask the teacher to let you know in advance about any planned school activities (field trips, hot lunch days, sports day, and birthday parties).
- Find out the times of meals and snacks at school. Explain how important it is for children with diabetes to have their meals and snacks on time and to eat all of their food. It may mean that your child has to eat on a field trip, on a bus, etc.
- Some schools have "reverse" lunches, where the children play outside first, and then eat. Other schools stagger lunches (11:00 or 12:45). Insulin and snacks may need to be adjusted for this.
- If your child changes schools, even within the same district, you need to ensure that the care plan is transferred to the new school.

### Discuss Low Blood Sugars:

- Explain what happens when your child has a low blood sugar, and how to treat it. Give the teacher a one-page instruction sheet on what to do for low blood sugars.
- Tell the teacher that **a low blood sugar must be treated right away so that it does not become an emergency!** Many children older than 6 or 7 can feel when they are having a low blood sugar, but they may still need help to treat it.
- Give the teacher a supply of fast-acting sugar (such as glucose tablets or juice) and extra snacks in a plastic container to keep in the classroom in case they are needed. Some parents also keep low blood sugar kits in the gym and the office. Older children will keep supplies in their backpacks or purses (not just their lockers, as they may not be close by).

## *When a Child with Type 1 Diabetes Starts School (continued)*

- Tell the teacher that your child cannot be left alone when they have a low blood sugar. Always have someone accompany your child to and from the office when low. Your child should be allowed to return to the classroom as soon as he or she is feeling better, but your child must be supervised by an adult, until all symptoms have disappeared.
- Plan to meet with any other teachers/school personnel your child has contact with (librarians, bus drivers, music teachers, school monitors, and gym teachers). Let them know that your child has diabetes, what low blood sugars look like, and how to treat them.
- Wearing a medical ID is very important in the school setting. [Many schools in BC](#) participate in the [No Child Without Program](#), which provides assistance for families in need to obtain a MedicAlert® ID.
- Explain that if a child has high blood sugars at school, it is generally not an emergency. The child may feel tired and thirsty, and they may need to go to the bathroom more often. They may also need insulin to help lower their blood sugars.

### **For Older Children/Teens:**

- Meet with your teachers and review your diabetes management with them. This lets the adults at school know about your needs, and what you are doing (such as doing blood glucose checks, eating snacks, and using insulin pens). Show them what an insulin pump looks like, so it won't be confused with a pager.
- Provide an information sheet that outlines your daily needs, and what they can do to help.
- Find out if there is a trained adult in the school who can assist in an emergency, if necessary.
- It helps if your close friends know that you have diabetes and are somewhat involved in your diabetes routine. They can offer support, or get food or help if it is needed.
- Set up a Diabetes Support Plan with the school  
([www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/diabetes/diabetes\\_support\\_plan.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/diabetes/diabetes_support_plan.pdf))

### **Provide Contact Information:**

Provide emergency contact numbers to the teacher (include home and work numbers, cell or pager number, and how you can be contacted during the day). You may also set up some blood sugar parameters with the teacher about when you want to be called for higher or lower readings. This is often called a "diabetes care plan". Nursing Support Services has a standard care plan for children with diabetes in BC, that allows for flexibility for each student's plan.

### **Additional Information:**

Canadian Diabetes Association: *Guidelines for the Care of Students Living with Diabetes at School (2014)*, available at [www.diabetes.ca/kidsatschool](http://www.diabetes.ca/kidsatschool)

BC Children's Hospital diabetes resources for families: <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/health-info/coping-support/diabetes>

BC Nursing Support Services: [www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/our-services/nursing-support](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/our-services/nursing-support)

Children with Diabetes Website: [www.childrenwithdiabetes.com](http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com)

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF): [www.jdrf.ca](http://www.jdrf.ca)