

Diabetes Dialog

Sick day management for kids with diabetes

Sick day management for children with diabetes can be a difficult and frustrating ordeal for any family. Blood sugar readings as high as 500 mg/dL can raise an alarm in any parent's mind about the fear of diabetic ketoacidosis. It's important to remain calm and remember all the basics of diabetes care. It helps to remind yourself that you are treating the child as a whole and not just the numbers. It is important to treat the high blood sugars to avoid DKA, but it also is just as important to treat the underlying illness to avoid prolonged high blood sugars.

Reminding yourself that a child who has diabetes gets the same colds and illnesses as any other child can put things into perspective. The major difference is that a child who has diabetes cannot produce the increased amount of insulin that is needed during an illness to control the higher blood sugars. This is why it is very important to check blood sugars more frequently during an illness and give more frequent insulin injections. Here are a few basic things to keep in mind when dealing with a child who has an acute illness and high blood sugars or ketones:

1. Use your sick day chart (given to families at the diabetes education classes) for management instructions.

2. Use the sick day flowsheet to record management.
3. Check urine ketones often.
4. Monitor blood sugars more frequently (every one to two hours until stable).
5. Correct blood sugars more frequently with insulin.
6. Treat the underlying illness (fluids, fever reducers, rest, antibiotics if prescribed by your primary physician).
7. If you are not sure what to do and blood sugars are not responding to frequent insulin dosing, call the diabetes urgent care line for help or go to the local emergency room.

Taking care of an ill child can be very daunting, but remaining calm and remembering the basics can be helpful. The key is to check blood sugars more frequently, give short-acting insulin more frequently and keep the child well hydrated. Fluids are very important to avoid dehydration for any sick child, but especially for kids with diabetes. Using the above checklist as a guideline when your child is sick can be very helpful, and when in doubt about anything, ask for help. ■

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Back to school with diabetes

Below is a list of diabetes-related supplies your child will need for a successful start to the school year:

- A new Diabetes School Plan (Individual Health Plan). It is a good idea to fill it out and have your doctor review and sign it before the first day of school. Don't forget to make extra copies. The more school staff members know how to care for your child the better.
- Blood sugar meter, test strips and lancets. It is a good idea to keep a meter at school so you always will have one when needed. Be sure the date and time are correct and do a quality control check on the meter to make sure it is testing accurately. Be sure to check the expiration dates on the blood sugar test strips and discard any outdated test strips.
- Glucagon kit. Again, check the expiration date. If possible, make sure that the kit will not expire during the school year.
- Insulin pens or cartridges and pen needle caps. Be sure to provide at least one extra pen or cartridge so that your child will have a backup when needed.

- Fast-acting sugar source for low blood sugar reactions. Be sure to provide an ample supply for your child's backpack or locker and the school office or classroom. Restock often.
- Ketone test strips (if ordered on your child's IHP).
- Blood sugar record book or communication sheet.

In addition, if your child is using an insulin pump, he or she will need:

- A backup method to give insulin in case the pump malfunctions or the infusion set kinks or comes out. These can include an insulin pen, cartridge or vial and pen needle caps or a syringe.
- Extra pump sets, if your child can insert it alone.

If possible, meet with your child's teachers, health room staff and school nurse before the first day to go over any questions or concerns about your child's diabetes care at school. Frequent communication is key to a safe and successful school year. ■

School transitions can impact diabetes management

One of the biggest changes that preadolescents and adolescents have to face is the transition between elementary, middle and high schools. Diabetes management is based on consistency, structure and predictability; however, the child's whole world can be turned upside down when entering a new school. Adolescence is about expanding horizons. It is an exhilarating but difficult time for all children. There are

many changes going on in their bodies, in their brains and in how they look and feel. When you add having to deal with diabetes, the transitions between these years can be very challenging times for kids and their parents. Both the physical changes in their bodies associated with puberty and developmental changes that are a part of growing up, like wanting independence and exhibiting risk-taking behaviors, can make sticking to a daily routine for diabetes care very difficult. These issues are likely to become more apparent when the child's environment changes, such as when he or she starts attending a new school.

So, how do we cope with these changes during school transitions? First, it is important for caregivers to recognize that as children become teenagers, it is normal to grapple with these puberty issues. We know that if we can establish good self-care habits early and keep parents and kids working closely together as a team, they are much more likely to have better diabetes control during transitions in adolescence and adulthood.

Physicians

To request additional copies of Diabetes Dialog in print or electronic format, please contact Renee Prink, senior public relations specialist, at (414) 266-5421 or rprink@chw.org.

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School transitions (continued)

One of the most important ways to do this is to be able to talk frequently and easily without conflict about daily diabetes care. Kids should be encouraged to discuss their diabetes condition and complete their diabetes care in front of new teachers, staff members, coaches and peers at school.

Children and adolescents should have some decision-making ability in how (not if) information about their diabetes will be shared with others at their school. Work together to plan how and when diabetes care can be completed within the new school schedule. Pay attention to ways the academic schedule can be changed to allow for the greatest success at school (for example, put gym classes immediately before or after lunch or at the end of the day).

Be frank about the dangers of substance use for people with diabetes.

Identify the various diabetes tasks and negotiate which family member is responsible for completing them each day. When children are young, parents often do all of their diabetes care, but as children grow older, the parents' role becomes more supervisory. Parents still are involved and oversee care, but are not directly responsible for completing the care.

Most of all, parents should be positive about what their child is trying to do in order to cope with the new situation and avoid criticizing bad results or mistakes. This will enable their child to build on strengths and successes over time. **■**

Your child's diabetes health plan for school

Each year, your child with diabetes requires creating a new Individual Health Plan for his or her diabetes care at school. You may have received one in the mail from the Diabetes Clinic at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin or your school district (only one IHP is required). In addition, your school may require medication administration authorization forms to be filled out for insulin and glucagon. After filling out the IHP, send it to the clinic through the mail or fax it for your doctor's review and signatures. If you would like the IHP sent to your child's school, please provide the address or fax number. If no information is provided for returning the plan, it will be mailed to your home.

New This Year: School Plan Clinics

If you need help completing your child's school plan, we will have walk-in School Plan Clinics. Bring your school plan into clinic for review and signature. A fee will be charged to your health insurance company for this visit. **■**

| School Plan Clinics dates and times | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Friday, Aug. 22 | 9 a.m.-Noon |
| Monday, Aug. 25 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Tuesday, Aug. 26 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Wednesday, Aug. 27 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Thursday, Aug. 28 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Friday, Aug. 29 | 9 a.m.-Noon |
| Tuesday, Sept. 2 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Wednesday, Sept. 3 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Thursday, Sept. 4 | 1 p.m.-4 p.m. |
| Friday, Sept. 5 | 9 a.m.-Noon |

What's the big deal about eating breakfast before school?

What's the big deal about eating breakfast before school? "I'm too tired"... "I'm not hungry"... "I have no time"... "I HATE cereal!" These are just a few of the reasons kids aren't eating breakfast before school.

Top 5 reasons why you should eat breakfast before school:

5. Your parents, teachers and diabetes dietitians tell you to. Breakfast will help you be the best you can be.
4. Your brain needs food to think during the school day! Breakfast can help you concentrate and lengthen your attention span.
3. Your body needs food for energy to exercise and to grow to your best potential.
2. Breakfast helps control blood sugars for the day. Skipping breakfast = skipping insulin.
1. To prevent overeating and extra snacking later in the day. This will keep you at a healthy weight.

Research in the past few years has shown enormous health benefits related to eating breakfast. Here are some solutions to some common complaints:

- Breakfast does not have to be traditional breakfast food items. Sandwiches, chicken and lettuce wrapped in wheat tortillas, cottage cheese and fruit, soup or fruit and nut trail mix are all healthy and count as breakfast.
- Breakfast does not need to be large in order to gain health benefits. Ideally, breakfast should contain at least two food groups. (For example, egg and toast, fruit and yogurt, cereal and milk.)
- Breakfast can be on-the-go and healthy, such as a high fiber granola bar, piece of fresh fruit, low-fat carton of milk or trail mix.

Bottom line: Eating even one food item for breakfast will help your body and mind work better the rest of the day. **■**

Get the most nutrition from your school lunch

Whether you bring a bag lunch to school or take hot lunch, having a balanced meal is important. It will give your brain energy for the school day and your body energy for after-school activities.

What should your lunch include for maximum nutrition?

Lean protein: Chicken or turkey lunch meat, tuna, egg, beans, cottage cheese, lean ham, small amount of peanut butter – get creative!

Fruits and vegetables: The goal is five servings of these a day. Make sure two of those servings are in your lunch. Try fruit or veggie kabobs on toothpicks for fun variety.

Grains: Whole grains are more filling and have more vitamins for long-lasting energy. Don't get stuck on boring bread. Switch it up with whole grain mini bagels, pitas, tortillas, buns or English muffins.

Dairy: Low-fat milk, yogurt or light cheese will give your bones a dose of calcium.

You can get more energy and nutrition from a la carte options, too. Follow these tips to choose a balanced meal. Following are two examples of nutritious lunches:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Grilled chicken sandwich | Triscuit crackers |
| Apple | String cheese |
| Raw veggies and dip | Side salad |
| Milk | Fruit cup |
| | Milk |

The bottom line is that good nutrition starts at breakfast and continues throughout the day. Give your body and mind the boost it deserves midday. Take it to the MAX! **■**

Back-to-school germ prevention

As kids head back to school, so do the germs they carry with them. The spread of germs tends to increase as school resumes due to closer contact with others. Students also may have traveled to distant places, bringing back with them new strains of viruses and bacteria. Below are a few tips to help prevent the spread of germs. These rules also should be followed at home to help prevent the spread of germs around the house.

1. Wash your hands – Children should wash their hands often and especially after:
 - Using the bathroom.
 - Sneezing or coughing.
 - Touching garbage or dirt.
 - Petting animals.
 - Touching someone who is sick.

Children also should wash their hands before:

- Eating.
- Entering school in the morning.

Hand washing should be done with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty or with antibacterial hand sanitizer. Children should wash their hands for as long as it takes them to sing the *Alphabet Song* or *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.

2. No sharing - Let your child know he or she should not share drinks and food with other children.
3. Cover your sneezes and coughs – Teach your children to cover their mouth with a tissue or the crook of their elbow to help prevent the spread of germs when they cough or sneeze. Explain to them that sneezing into an open hand will spread the germs to everything they touch.
4. Keep immunizations up to date – It's important to keep track of your child's immunizations. A flu shot is recommended for most children with diabetes. It is important for you to discuss this with your child's pediatrician. **■**



The Diabetes Clinic at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin is one of the largest in the country, serving more than 1,700 children with diabetes. We offer:

- Full consultative service for both inpatient and outpatient settings.
- Comprehensive diabetes education program, including advanced self-management.
- Behavioral health services.
- 24-hour phone availability.
- School support program.
- Outpatient insulin pump program.

For more information about the Diabetes Program at Children's Hospital, visit www.chw.org/diabetes.

For an appointment, call (414) 607-5280 or toll-free (877) 607-5280.