

Children and Type 1 diabetes



When a child is diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, the role of a caregiver becomes more important than ever. Family life and daily routines may seem more complicated in the beginning. Over time, and with the support of your diabetes health-care team, this will change. You will discover that your child can have a healthy and fulfilling life with diabetes.

Caring for a Child with Diabetes

Testing blood sugar (glucose) and giving insulin may seem overwhelming in the beginning. As you work with your diabetes health-care team you will learn about diabetes and become more confident. It is important that you become comfortable with caring for your child's diabetes so that you can help your child become comfortable too.

As the caregiver of a child with type 1 diabetes, you will help them with:

- Monitoring blood sugar
- Administering insulin
- Having regular meals and snacks
- Balancing food, medication and regular physical activity
- Recognizing the signs of low and high blood sugar

Talking to Your Child about Diabetes

The way you talk to your child about diabetes will have a big impact on how they perceive their diabetes and themselves. Being positive and supportive will help boost your child's self-esteem.

- Talk to your child about how foods fit into a healthy lifestyle. For example, no single food should be described as "bad" or "junk".
- Describe blood sugar levels as "in target", "high", or "low". Try to avoid describing blood sugar levels as "good" or "bad".
- Remember that diabetes is only one part of a child's life. Talk to your child about other important things that are happening in their life such as school, sports and social events.



Involving Other Caregivers

It is important that other caregivers understand your child's diabetes and know how to care for them. Members of your child's diabetes health-care team can provide education to others. Consider providing other caregivers with:

- A schedule of blood sugar monitoring times and insulin requirements
- A meal and snack plan
- A treatment plan for low blood sugar
- A treatment plan for high blood sugar
- Contact information for emergency situations.

Involving a Child in Diabetes Care

Encourage your child to be involved in their diabetes care right from the beginning. Identify reasonable tasks that your child can do for themselves. Even young children can pick which finger is to be tested and read the numbers on the meter. As they become more independent, children can take on more of a role in their diabetes care, with parental support.



Related articles: *Type 1 diabetes: the basics, Basic carbohydrate counting, Getting started with insulin, Lows and highs: Blood sugar levels, Managing your blood sugar, and Just the basics for healthy eating*

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diabetes.ca | 1-800 BANTING (226-8464) | info@diabetes.ca

Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Eleven million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and, funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

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