Let's Talk About...

Teacher information about diabetes

Diabetes happens when a person's body cannot make enough insulin. Insulin is the body's natural way to break down glucose. Glucose (a type of sugar) comes from many foods, mainly starches and carbohydrates like breads, pasta, and cereals. Children with diabetes have high levels of glucose in their blood. This is because they do not make enough insulin to break down the glucose they eat. This can be dangerous. In children, diabetes is treated with insulin injections, healthy eating, and exercise. Eating alone cannot control diabetes in children and diabetes is not contagious. Diabetes is not caused from eating "too much sugar".

Hypoglycemia (low blood glucose)

A concern during school time is that the child's blood glucose may drop too low. This is called an "insulin reaction" or hypoglycemia. This situation is most likely to occur in children with diabetes.

- when the child misses or delays a meal or snack
- during a strenuous activity just before lunch
- during a lengthy field trip or field day

Symptoms

- unusually sleepy
- confused
- moody or combative
- daydreaming
- lack of concentration
- lack of coordination
- sweating
- pale
- shaky
- suddenly hungry
- crying
- headache

How do you treat hypoglycemia?

Treat hypoglycemia **immediately**, and when in doubt, **treat it.** Give the child one of the following:

- juice (any kind) - 4 oz. or ½ cup
- regular soda pop (not diet) - ½ can
- glucose tablets - start with 2-3
- milk - 1 cup (1 carton)

The teacher or staff should stay with the student until he is more responsive and asks to resume normal activity. This takes about 15 to 20 minutes. If the child does not respond in that time, repeat the juice or glucose tablets, then call the parents.

Once the child responds, send him to lunch with an adult, or give him a snack of peanut butter, cheese, crackers, a meat sandwich, or a glass of milk.

If you are unsure about what is happening with the child, and if a blood glucose meter is available, check the child's blood glucose and give the results to the parents.

Hyperglycemia (high blood glucose)

Sometimes the child's blood glucose will be too high. This is called hyperglycemia. It may be due to:

- illness
- eating too much
- missing an insulin dose
- stress

The child will drink lots of water and urinate more than usual. **If this persists or if the child's blood glucose meter reading is above 300mg/dl, follow the instructions on the student's diabetes care plan and notify the parents.**

Nutrition

The most widely used form of meal planning for people with diabetes is carbohydrate counting. It is the most accurate way to match food and insulin. Most children with diabetes have to count the amount of carbohydrates in their school meals. It is helpful for the child to have school menus and to have nutrition information for foods served at school.

Some children with diabetes need a regular mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack so their blood glucose level doesn't drop too low. They may

need an extra snack if the class is going to have a strenuous field trip or field day. This will keep the glucose levels from dropping too low because of extra physical activity.

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