

# Let's Talk About...

## Diabetes: Information for teachers

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder that affects the body's ability to balance blood glucose (sugar), which is raised by certain foods, especially carbohydrates. Diabetes is not contagious and is not caused by eating too much sugar.

### What do I need to know?

#### Insulin and carbohydrates

**Children who have diabetes are almost always treated with insulin.** This means they need to take insulin anytime they have a snack or meal that contains carbohydrates. The amount of insulin they need depends on the amount of carbohydrates they eat and their sensitivity to insulin.

Children usually receive insulin by injection or with a pump. A student who has type 1 diabetes cannot be treated with pills.

#### Hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia [hy-poh-gly-see-mee-uh] is the medical term for low blood glucose. Hypoglycemia can be dangerous for anyone with diabetes.

#### Hypoglycemia is most likely to occur:

- If the student misses or does not finish a meal or snack, especially after taking insulin
- During or after physical activity

#### Common symptoms of hypoglycemia are:

- Sleepiness
- Moodiness or combativeness
- Sudden hunger
- Sweating
- Grumpiness
- Lack of concentration
- Confusion
- Headaches
- Feeling "weird"
- Pale skin
- Shakiness
- Crying

### What do I need to know about hypoglycemia?

**Hypoglycemia should be treated immediately.** If a meter is not available and the child has symptoms, notify the office. **A child with hypoglycemia should not be left alone or sent to the office by themselves.** If a blood glucose meter is available, check your student's blood glucose level. If it is below 80 mg/dL, treat according to the instructions below.

- 1 Give 15 grams (g) of fast-acting carbohydrates.** These examples each have about 15g of carbs:
  - ½ cup juice or regular soda (not diet)
  - 1 fruit roll-up or a small package of fruit snacks
  - 3–4 glucose tablets, or 1 tube of glucose gel
  - 1 cup skim milk

Wait 15 minutes for the treatment to work and then check the student's blood glucose levels. **Don't keep feeding your student until the symptoms go away.** If they eat too much, their blood glucose can get too high.

**If the hypoglycemia is within 15 minutes of lunch, give 15 g carbs.** Then give the right amount of insulin to cover lunch, but do not include the extra 15g of carbs in the insulin dose. Check the student's blood glucose 30 minutes after they have finished eating.

- 2 If the student's blood glucose remains below 80 mg/dL after eating 15 carbs:**
  - Have the student eat another 15g carbs.
  - Check their blood glucose again in 15 minutes. **If it's still below 80 mg/dL, give 30g carbs and call their parents or healthcare provider. Make sure someone stays with the student during this time.**
- 3 If the student's blood glucose is between 80 mg/dL and 100 mg/dL and it will be 30 minutes or more before lunch, give another small snack with 15g carbs and some protein.**
- 4 Learn how and when to use an emergency glucagon/glucagen kit.**

**Hyperglycemia**

Hyperglycemia [hy-per-gly-see-mee-uh] is the medical term for high blood glucose. It can be caused by:

- Illness
- Missing an insulin dose
- Eating too much
- Stress

**Common signs and symptoms of hyperglycemia are:**

- Thirst (drinking more than usual)
- Urinating (peeing) more than usual
- Lack of concentration

Hyperglycemia is not a medical emergency.

**What should I do?**

- Allow the student unlimited access to water and the restroom.
- If symptoms persists, or if the student’s blood glucose meter reading is above 300 mg/ dL, follow the instructions on the student’s diabetes medical management order (DMMO).
- Notify the student’s parents.



**Nutrition at school**

Students who are insulin-dependent must count the carbohydrates in their food.

- Provide meal and snack menus for students and their families. These should include carbohydrate counts so insulin doses can be calculated correctly.
- If food is given during class times, the student may need to give insulin to cover the carbohydrates.

**Notes**

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