

# Diabetes (Type 1)



**Type 1 diabetes, formerly known as juvenile diabetes, is a disease in which the immune system attacks and destroys cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes is not caused by and cannot be managed by lifestyle changes. There is no cure for type 1 diabetes. It is controlled through regular, daily doses of insulin along with other steps to control blood sugar levels. Students with type 1 diabetes will need to do regular blood sugar level checks via a finger prick and a blood glucose metre.**

**Depending on the blood sugar number, the student and staff may have to respond accordingly.**

## Implications for Planning and Awareness

- Meet with the student and parents early in the school year to discuss how the school can support this student's needs related to type 1 diabetes. This could include finding out about:
  - the student's strengths, interests and areas of need
  - specific symptoms that may affect the student at school
  - successful strategies used at home or in the community that also could be used at school.
- In collaboration with parents and health care professionals, develop a written management plan that aligns with school and jurisdictional policies and protocols. This plan should include specific information, such as:
  - the role of the school staff in managing diabetes
  - signs and symptoms of low and high blood sugar
  - procedures for checking blood sugar levels
  - steps for treatment when the student's blood sugar is too low or too high
  - when and/or what emergency measures should be taken.
- Collaborate with the parents and student to consider if, and how, they would like to share specific information on type 1 diabetes with peers. If they wish to do this, consultation with health care providers, such as school or community health nurses, may be helpful.
- Provide a private, sanitary place to test blood and inject insulin. In consultation with student and parents, develop a sanitary disposal and clean-up routine.
- Learn as much as you can about how this condition may affect learning and social and emotional well-being. Reading, asking questions and talking to qualified professionals will build your understanding and help you make decisions to support the student's success at school.

Your awareness needs to begin with conversations with the student's parents.



- Collaborate with the school and/or jurisdictional team to identify and coordinate any needed consultation and services with community health care professionals.
- Develop a system for sharing information with relevant staff members about the student's condition and successful strategies.

### Implications for Instruction

- Develop a process for the student to get up to speed if he or she has to leave the classroom to check blood sugar levels or take medication. This could include assigning a buddy to the student.
- Be aware that a change in student behaviour could be a symptom of blood sugar changes. For example, inability to concentrate can be a sign that blood sugar is low, while aggressive behaviour can be a sign it is high. Rule out or respond to a blood sugar problem before attempting any other instructional or behavioural strategies.
- Be aware that physical education class and other physical activity can lower blood sugar. Recognize the symptoms of low blood sugar and be prepared to manage it. Encourage physical activity if the student's blood sugar is high.

### Implications for Social and Emotional Well-being

- Create a supportive environment for the student to manage diabetes; for example:
  - allow snacks, when necessary
  - provide bathroom and water privileges without drawing attention to the student
  - provide a location and supervision for the student to be active, if needed.
- Recognize that the student may feel left out of situations that involve sugary snacks, such as class parties. Control the type of shared snacks brought to the class. Do not give candy or sugar treats to the student or classmates as positive reinforcement or incentives.

Parents know their children well and can offer insights on how to support their social and emotional well-being. There is strength in collaborating on strategies that could be used at home, at school and in the community.



**As you consider the implications for this medical condition, think about the following questions:**

1. Do I need further conversations with the parents to better understand this student's health needs?  Yes  No
2. Do I need targeted professional learning?  
If yes, what specific topics and strategies would I explore?  Yes  No
3. Is consultation with external service providers required (e.g., Student Health Partnership, Alberta Children's Hospital, Glenrose Hospital)?  Yes  No  
If yes, what issues and questions would we explore?

**Links for further information:**

Children with Diabetes. "Information for Teachers and Child-Care Providers." [http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com/d\\_0q\\_200.htm](http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com/d_0q_200.htm)

British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Awareness of Students with Diverse Learning Needs: What Teachers Need to Know: Diabetes.* <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/awareness/39.htm>

Toronto Hospital for Sick Children. "About Kids Health." <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Diabetes/Diabetes-Home.aspx?articleID=6497&categoryID=DB>

**Please note:**

These websites are for information only and the user is responsible for evaluating the content and appropriate uses of the information.

