

# Diabetes *At School*

*School can be difficult for any child, but adding diabetes to the picture can make it even harder. Managing diabetes in a child at school can be seen as a challenge, however it is possible. It requires collaboration between the school, the child, the parents / guardians and the treating doctor / health care team. Success begins with education – in terms of both knowledge and skills. Below are some recommended tips for managing diabetes in the school:*

## Feeling Just Like Any Other Kid



The last thing a child wants to feel is 'different' to his or her peers.

There may not be any other child in the class or school with diabetes, making them feel very isolated.

Education of the child, parents/guardians, schools staff and students about diabetes can help make the child with diabetes feel less different and confident at school.

It is important to remember, the child has the right to check his/her blood sugar levels and treat a low blood sugar in the classroom if it occurs. Children with diabetes should be able to participate in the entire school experience.

There are laws protecting the rights of children with diabetes – Section 504 plan, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

## Health Care Team

A child with diabetes needs to have a health care team who can help them put all the pieces of the puzzle together and help them to become a self-manager of his or her diabetes.

Education is key – there are a lot of self-care needs a child with diabetes has to undertake. The health care team is also an excellent resource for the parents and school if there are any questions or concerns.

The child should have developed a '504 plan' or Diabetes Medical Management Plan (DMMP) that outlines the diabetes care the child requires at school.



*Partnership is essential*

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## The School's Fear Becomes the Child's Fear

If the school has concerns about managing diabetes, the child will also have these fears.

It is important that the child feels that they can tell their teachers and peers about what is happening to them or how they feel. If the child senses a fear amongst their teachers and peers, they may not open up, leading to a potentially serious situation. The school has a responsibility to be able to address the needs of a child with diabetes, including:

- Knowledge of the symptoms and treatment of low and high blood glucose
- Perform a finger stick blood glucose
- Take the appropriate action outlined in the DMMP
- Administer insulin and glucagon if required
- Provide information on foods served at the school
- Allow the child to stick to their eating plan
- Provide the child with permission to attend required medical visits, snack, monitor, take a bathroom break or see the school nurse if required

## Being a Self-manager

As early as possible in the child's life with diabetes, he or she should be encouraged to undertake as many of the self-care activities as able – from blood sugar testing, taking medication, food choices and treating high or low blood sugar levels. If the child is dependent at home, they will be dependent at school.

## Parent / Guardian Responsibility

Parents have a responsibility to promote self-care within their child with diabetes, with the child having the required knowledge and skill to undertake self-care activities at school. It is important also to provide the school with all the necessary information, equipment and emergency contact numbers to address any expected situation that may arise.

### Key points:

- Successful management requires team work – child, parents/guardians, health care team and the school.
- Develop a Diabetes Medical Management Plan
- Learn all you can about diabetes – don't be scared of it!
- Promote self-care abilities in the child with diabetes
- Allow the child (where capable) to:
  - Follow their meal plan and allow for flexibility in choices
  - Monitor their glucose levels (especially before exercise class)
  - Supervise / Administer required medication
  - Treat a low glucose level
  - Get involved in all school activities
  - Ensure the school has all the required information, equipment and emergency contact numbers to address any expected situation that may arise (Section 504 Plan).



**Education is key!**

South Eastern Florida Regional Diabetes Program  
Diabetes Education Service  
1450 Northwest 10th Avenue, Miami FL, 33136  
Phone: 305-243-3696  
Fax: 305-243-5791  
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