

10 things school staff should know about type 1 diabetes

1

Children will not outgrow type 1 diabetes:

With type 1 diabetes, the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin have been destroyed. People with type 1 diabetes will always have to take insulin injections (until there is a cure). Changes in lifestyle or diet will not “improve” type 1 diabetes.

2

Insulin is not a cure: But it is the only treatment. Without insulin, people with type 1 diabetes would die.

3

It takes a lot of work to manage diabetes:

Children with type 1 diabetes usually look healthy. That’s because they and their families are working hard to keep blood sugar levels in a target range. They do this by checking levels frequently, and acting quickly when needed—such as adding insulin to account for a special treat, or having a snack because of extra physical activity.

4

Technology is helpful, but it doesn’t work on its own:

Some students wear insulin pumps to deliver insulin. A pump is another way to deliver insulin, and whether or not to use a pump is an individual choice. Other students wear continuous glucose monitors (CGMs), which take blood sugar readings every few minutes. But none of these devices works on its own. People still have to carefully monitor blood sugar, food intake, and activity, and make decisions about how much insulin to give and when.

5

Blood sugar levels can change quickly:

It’s important to check blood sugar often, because there are many factors that can cause it to change from minute to minute.

6

Low blood sugar needs immediate attention:

If a student feels low, or you suspect a student is low, act right away. Do not leave the student alone. Check blood sugar, and give fast-acting sugar as needed.

7

High blood sugar means extra trips to the bathroom:

When blood sugar levels are high, the body tries to flush out the extra glucose through urine. Children with type 1 diabetes should always have unrestricted access to the washroom.

8

Kids with diabetes can still eat sweets

(and anything else): Unless they have food allergies or intolerances, students with diabetes can eat anything that others can—as long as they have enough insulin. By planning ahead, school staff can ensure kids with diabetes are included in activities involving special treats.

9

Even students who are independent may need help managing diabetes:

As students get older, they take on more of their diabetes management. But they still need help from time to time, especially if their blood sugar is low (hypoglycemia).

10

Kids with diabetes want to be like everyone else:

Like other kids, students with type 1 diabetes want to fit in. They don’t want to be singled out because of their disease. Working with students and families to ensure kids can manage their diabetes and still feel included is an important role for school staff.