

MANAGING DIABETES IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Guidelines, resources and tips to help your family
live better with diabetes



A wellness publication prepared for members of Samaritan Health Plans

OUR MEMBERS. OUR NEIGHBORS.

Children and adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes or Type 2 Diabetes can learn to manage their condition and live long, healthy, happy lives.



Diabetes in children and adolescents

Diabetes is one of the most common diseases in school-aged children. Diabetes is a group of diseases in which, due to various reasons, the body cannot correctly regulate the amount of sugar in the blood. This leads to high levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood, also known as high blood sugar or high blood glucose. The two most common types of diabetes in children and adolescents are Type 1 and Type 2.

What is Type 1 Diabetes?

- Usually identified in children and young adults.
- Previously known as juvenile diabetes.
- People with Type 1 diabetes do not make their own insulin, so they have to take insulin throughout the day. Insulin is a hormone the body uses to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy necessary for daily life.
- Only 5-10% of people with diabetes have this form of the disease.
- With planning and preparation, your child or adolescent can do all of their normal day-to-day activities, such as exercising or going out to eat.

What is Type 2 Diabetes?

- The body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin (called insulin resistance). Insulin is a hormone that the body uses to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy necessary for daily life.
- Previously called "adult onset diabetes." However, due to an increase in childhood obesity and physical inactivity, type 2 diabetes is occurring more often in children and adolescents.
- May be able to be controlled by eating a healthy diet and increasing activity, or may require treatment with glucose-lowering medications.



FIVE KEY THINGS TO DO to keep diabetes under control

Managing your child or adolescents' diabetes is the best way to keep their diabetes from getting out of control and causing complications. The following are five key elements to keep your child or adolescent healthy and prevent complications.

1 Keep active

Daily physical activity is important and recommended for all children and adolescents with diabetes because it lowers blood glucose levels and increases insulin sensitivity. However, physical activity can lower blood glucose too much, causing hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Children and adolescents with diabetes, especially those taking insulin, need to check their blood sugar before starting an activity and sit out if their blood sugar is too low. Ask your health care provider what is considered too low for your child or adolescent to safely start a physical activity.

2 Eat healthy

A balanced, healthy meal plan is important to ensure proper nutrition for growth and limit dramatic changes in blood glucose levels. Work with your child or adolescents' health care provider, registered dietician, nutritionist, or diabetes educator to create a meal plan that best fits their needs.

3 Take medicine as directed

It sounds simple, and it is: be sure your child or adolescent takes their medicine as directed. This will help to reduce their risk for complications.

4 Test blood regularly and know target levels

Children and adolescents with diabetes should test their blood glucose regularly and know the acceptable range and response for their test results. Ask your child or adolescents' health care provider the appropriate blood glucose range for your child. Also ask when to test, how often to test, and how to treat results that are out of the appropriate range. Keep a log or diary of your child or adolescents' blood glucose readings including the date, time, results, and response to show their health care provider at office visits.

5 Know the symptoms of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)

Children are at increased risk for hypoglycemia. Know the signs of hypoglycemia and ask your health care provider how to treat it. Symptoms of hypoglycemia include, but are not limited to:

- Irritability
- Shakiness, trembling or weakness
- Lack of coordination
- Confusion
- Dizziness

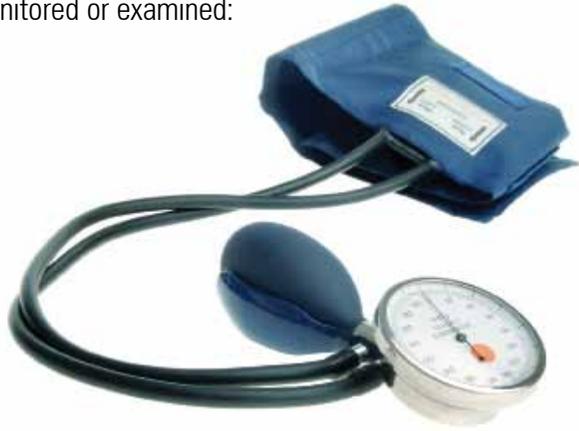


Everyone's diabetes treatment and target numbers will be different and will change over time. Ask your child or adolescents' doctor if there are any changes in their treatment plan at each office visit.

What you can expect at a diabetes visit with your health care provider

At each diabetes visit with your child's or adolescent's health care provider, expect the following to be monitored or examined:

- Height and weight
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Blood pressure
- Blood glucose log or diary
- Injection sites (if using insulin)



Other tests that may be recommended

There are many tests and exams recommended for diabetics beyond those listed above. The frequency of these tests and exams will vary depending on the type of diabetes your child or adolescent has, the age of onset, and family history.

Ask your child's or adolescent's health care provider when they should start having the following tests and exams and how often and when they should be repeated:

- **Hemoglobin A1c** – a blood test to determine blood glucose control over a period of 2-3 months.
- **Microalbumin** – a urine test to screen for kidney problems.
- **Eye exams** – to look for eye conditions specific to diabetes.
- **Cholesterol test** – to monitor cholesterol levels as diabetes increases the risk of heart disease.
- **Dental exams** – to check for tooth and gum problems.
- **Foot exams** – to look for circulatory issues or non-healing wounds.

Teaching your child to care for their diabetes

Children and adolescents must learn how to care for their diabetes themselves. As the parent or guardian of a child or adolescent with diabetes you have a special responsibility to ensure they have the education they need to control their diabetes in the future. It is your responsibility to:

- Know if your child or adolescent has type 1 or type 2 diabetes and educate them on the type of diabetes they have.
- Set up a plan for good compliance and self-management of their lifelong disease.
- Educate your child or adolescent on any changes in their medications or blood sugar testing requirements. Treatments may change as time goes by and their diabetes progresses.

Gradually turn over care to your child or adolescent as they are ready to take on more responsibility.

School-age children can be educated on the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia and can assist in monitoring their blood glucose levels. They can also start participating in decisions about food intake.

Adolescents, with proper education and support, may be able to take over their own blood glucose testing and medication regimen. If insulin dependent, they may be ready to learn how insulin doses are adjusted based on blood glucose levels and food intake. Hand these responsibilities over gradually and confirm their understanding of each component of their diabetes care.

Regardless of age, children and adolescents must be supervised as they gradually take over their diabetes care. Be alert to any indications that your child or adolescent is becoming overwhelmed or their diabetes is getting out of control and be ready to step in.

Attend a diabetes education class

To encourage education about diabetes, attend a diabetes education class with your child or adolescent. If they are too young to understand the concepts of diabetes, go yourself and have your child attend when they are ready.

The following classes and support groups are offered through Samaritan Health Services. If you would like additional information, please visit the website at www.samhealth.org.

Diabetes management classes

This class gives an overview of diabetes, including its causes and symptoms, and suggests diet, exercise and medication modifications. This class also covers the psychological and emotional aspects. If the group setting is not convenient for you, ask about individual classes.

Albany: (541) 812-4839

Lincoln City: (541) 996-7171

Corvallis: (541) 768-6973

Newport: (541) 574-4682

Lebanon: (541) 451-6313

Diabetes support groups

This monthly support group provides ongoing education and encouragement for people with diabetes and their families.

Albany: (541) 812-4839

Corvallis: (541) 768-6973

Lincoln City: (541) 996-7171

Some classes and programs may charge a fee. Class fees may be covered by your Samaritan Health Plans' insurance. Contact our customer service at 1-800-832-4580. If you have a hearing or voice problem, you can use Oregon Relay Service by calling TTY 1-800-735-2900.