

Diabetes: Sending Your Child to School



Managing diabetes can be hard, especially for children and teenagers. Having diabetes may cause your child to feel different or embarrassed at school, especially when checking blood sugar or taking shots.

As your child faces these challenges, be as helpful and supportive as you can. Remind your child that diabetes care is very important. It may help for your child to explain to classmates what diabetes is and what shots and meters are for.

Having a good treatment plan can make things easier. Keep your child's teachers, coaches, and other school staff informed about how to give diabetes care and manage blood sugar emergencies. You may want to schedule a yearly meeting with the school staff.

Managing diabetes at school

Your doctor can help you make a written **treatment plan** for managing diabetes. Give this plan to your child's teachers and coaches and other school staff who work with your child.

The plan should include:

- When to check blood sugar and give insulin. Include your child's target blood sugar range and dose amounts for insulin.
- Your child's usual symptoms of low and high blood sugar.
- What to do for high and low blood sugar emergencies, and when to contact you.
- When to give meals and snacks, and what foods are best. Include instructions for parties and field trips.
- Instructions for testing urine for ketones, including what to do if ketones are present.
- Emergency contact numbers, including your child's main caregivers and doctor.

For older children who take insulin to school, check whether the school has rules about students carrying their own medicines, needles, and blood sugar meters. Many schools require that students get special permission or that supplies be kept at the school.

Your child should have permission to:

- Eat a snack anywhere, including the classroom, gym, and school bus.
- Use the restroom and get drinks when needed.
- See the school nurse or other health staff when needed.
- Miss school for doctor appointments.

Give school staff all the materials and equipment needed to care for your child, including a monitor and supplies for blood sugar tests, insulin, syringes, glucagon (if needed), and materials for testing urine for ketones. Make sure the staff knows how to use them. Your child may need help doing a blood sugar test when his or her levels are low.

Your child's treatment plan should list the staff members who are responsible for handling diabetes care and emergency care. The school should provide an adult staff member and a backup person who:

- Can test and record your child's blood sugar.
- Know what to do for high or low blood sugar levels.
- Are trained to give insulin and glucagon, if needed.
- Can test your child's urine for blood or ketones and know what to do if the results are not normal.
- Know your child's meal and snack schedule and can remind your child when it is time to eat.

Blood sugar emergencies

High or low blood sugar levels can be dangerous if not treated. Talk to your doctor about what to do when blood sugar gets very high or low. Make sure this information is in your child's treatment plan.

The **warning signs of high blood sugar** include:

- Blurry vision.
- Having to urinate more than usual.
- Feeling very thirsty or hungry.

The **warning signs of low blood sugar** include:

- Sweating.
- Feeling shaky, weak, or dizzy.
- Feeling hungry.

Young children often cannot recognize symptoms as well as adults, which puts them at risk for low blood sugar emergencies.

When your child's blood sugar is low, a school staff member should stay with him or her until the blood sugar returns to normal and is stable. Have your child carry quick-sugar food, like glucose tablets or juice, at all times to prevent low blood sugar emergencies.

When to call for help

Call 911 anytime you think your child may need emergency care. Call if:

- Your child is unconscious or suddenly very sleepy. This is a sign of low blood sugar.
- Your child passes out, and his or her breath smells fruity. This is a sign of high blood sugar.

Call your doctor now or seek medical care right away if:

- Your child has low blood sugar that stays below his or her target range after eating some quick-sugar food.
- Your child has high blood sugar that stays above his or her target range after you follow the steps for high blood sugar.
- Your child has high blood sugar after taking a missed dose of insulin or taking an extra dose of insulin prescribed by the doctor.
- Your child has high blood sugar, and a urine test for ketones shows more than 2+ or moderate or higher ketones.