

Life



with diabetes

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International

November 2008

Topics in Living with Type 1 Diabetes

Managing Sick Days

JDRF has prepared the following tips to help you better manage sick days—but be sure to talk to your doctor as well. These general guidelines will most likely need to be adjusted depending on the person with type 1 diabetes and the nature and severity of the illness.

Monitor blood sugar levels more frequently

When you are under stress from illness or injury, your body releases hormones, which can cause blood sugar levels to skyrocket. Loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting, on the other hand, may result in extremely low blood sugar levels. Since you can't be sure how an illness will affect blood sugar levels, it is important to check them often. How often depends on the individual and the seriousness of the illness, but a general target is at least every two to three hours.

[Click here to read more](#)

Ask a Spouse

How Can I Be Supportive of My Partner with Type 1 Diabetes?

Q: I am dating a 30-year-old man with type 1 diabetes (he was diagnosed 26 years ago). I think we might get married and I want to be supportive of his condition. Do you have any suggestions of what I can do (or not do) or say?

A: Hi, I'm a volunteer with JDRF. My husband, Charlie, has had type 1 diabetes since age 9, and we have two children. As online volunteers, we are here to listen and offer support, but please know that we cannot offer medical/legal advice.

[Click here to read more](#)

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month



Log on to www.jdrf.org throughout the month of November for ongoing coverage of National Diabetes Awareness Month events, including World Diabetes Day, November 14.

New Survey for Adults with Type 1 Diabetes

JDRF is conducting a survey to better understand the needs and habits of adults with type 1 diabetes. We would be very grateful if you would give us a few minutes of your time to answer a few questions and provide your feedback. [Take the survey...](#)

Ask a Parent

Caring for an Infant with Diabetes

Q: Hi, I am looking for information about infants with diabetes. My daughter is nine months old, diagnosed two months ago.

A: I am responding to the e-mail that you sent to the JDRF Online Support Team. I am the mother of a 22-year-old son who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 20 months old—not quite as young as your daughter, but a challenge nonetheless as I am sure you can relate! Also, I am a volunteer, and cannot offer any medical or professional advice.

[Click here to read more](#)

Topics in Living with Type 1 Diabetes

Managing Sick Days

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Don't stop taking insulin

People with type 1 diabetes should never completely stop taking their insulin, even when they're not eating anything. Insulin is necessary to maintain normal metabolism, and without it, the body starts to burn fat, which can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). Therefore, even if you or your child is vomiting or unable to eat, you will still need to take insulin. To determine the proper dosage, use blood sugar numbers to guide you, or call your doctor for help.

Check urine for ketones

This is very important for people with type 1 diabetes. The presence of ketones in the urine, regardless of blood sugar level, shows that the body is in serious need of insulin. This could become a life-threatening situation if not corrected. If you find ketones in the urine, give additional insulin and lots of fluids. If the ketones don't clear up in a few hours, call your doctor.

Be careful with over-the-counter medicines

Over-the-counter remedies for colds, allergies, upset stomachs, etc., may contain ingredients that raise or lower blood sugars, or that imitate the symptoms of high or low blood sugar. Be sure to read the labels before you buy any over-the-counter medication. Some products recommend that people with diabetes check with their doctors before using the product.

Have a game plan and don't hesitate to ask for help

Ideally, you and your doctor should come up with a strategy for managing sick days before you or your child ever gets sick. Put it in writing, and then make adjustments as you gain experience with sick days. Discuss the possibility of using smaller, more frequent doses of short-acting insulin to better avoid high blood sugars. For low blood sugars brought on by vomiting or loss of appetite, you'll need to replace carbs—perhaps with liquids or soft foods.

Call your doctor if you notice the following: fever or illness that lasts longer than two days, or vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than eight hours; blood sugar levels that are higher than about 250-300 mg/dl that you can't seem to bring down; ketones in the urine that don't go away within a few hours; inability to keep any food or liquid down; or any time that you just feel uncomfortable or confused about what to do. In order to communicate effectively with the doctor, be sure to keep accurate records of blood glucose readings, ketones, medication, fever, and all symptoms.

Remember that the care of diabetes is a group effort involving you, your doctor, and other members of your diabetes care team. These tips should not replace or supersede this team effort.

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Caring for an Infant with Diabetes

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My goodness, seven months—that must have come as quite a shock to you and your family. Even though Justin has had diabetes for over 20 years, I can still remember quite clearly how we felt in those early months. Having a child diagnosed so young, the difficult thing for me was making sure Justin ate enough so that he wouldn't have a low blood sugar after his injection. Our doctor had us give him his insulin after he ate because we never knew how much he was going to eat at any given time and this would help us avoid a low as much as possible.

Another issue was that it was difficult finding someone to watch Justin if we had somewhere to go and needed to leave him; but we soon learned to count on one or two friends to help out. If they weren't available, Justin just came with us or we didn't go. It took a little adjusting, but it worked out. Justin has been very outgoing and comfortable with people since an early age—maybe that was one of the “side effects” of going out with mom and dad all the time.

Having an infant or toddler with diabetes does present many challenges, and I remember just taking one day at a time and doing our very best. As I said above, Justin is 22 years old now and is a very resilient, adaptable person. He doesn't remember ever

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not having diabetes but he certainly would love an opportunity to see what it feels like! Hopefully he will have that opportunity some time in the future—he's counting on it.

One of the things that has helped me tremendously throughout the years has been my association with my local JDRF chapter. The support I have received from other families has carried me through many things. Just having someone understand what I was going through was invaluable. If you haven't been in touch with your local chapter I think you will find it helpful also and I can arrange for the chapter to contact you if you provide me with your address or even just your zip code.

Lastly, there was some information in the news recently about type 1 diabetes in infants and a rare form of diabetes called monogenic diabetes. JDRF has a separate website about it:

www.monogenicdiabetes.org as well as a Monogenic Diabetes Hotline: 1-866-780-0096. When I saw that your daughter was diagnosed at seven months, I remembered reading about this and thought it would interest you. It is a rare condition and may not apply to your daughter, but I always find it helpful to know as much as I can, and I thought you might, too.

Justin and I wish you and your family the very best. Please write back if you would like. Take care!

If you have a question for JDRF's Online Diabetes Support Team, go to www.jdrf.org/diabetessupport.

Ask a Spouse

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Your question asked about ways to support your boyfriend and to learn about diabetes, so let me share a little bit about how I did both. In terms of support, I think the best thing to do is let him know how much you care, and how much you respect all the time and energy he puts into taking care of himself. And, on the flip side, to let him know that you know he works hard even if he has a bad day, diabetes-wise, which happens to even the most conscientious people with diabetes. You can also be supportive by making the things he needs to do easier for himself. I try to keep low carb and low sugar foods in the house, to cook (or order take-out!) the same way, and to make opportunities to exercise available to him by watching the kids, not over-scheduling the weekend, etc. At the end of the day, it's his health and his responsibility, but whatever I can do to make the physical and mental strain of all that work easier for him helps.

In addition to JDRF, I think the best place to learn is directly from your boyfriend's endocrinologist and/or certified diabetes educator. Have you ever joined him for a doctor's appointment? Are you trained on how to use the pump in case he needs your assistance? My husband was pleasantly surprised back when we were dating when I asked to go with him to meet the new doctor and hear about the latest medical news on diabetes. Being his partner and advocate for the best care has helped me learn, and has let him know how much I care.

I also think being involved in JDRF has been a big help, and I'd encourage you to get involved as well. It's the best way to meet other people with diabetes and their spouses, and to help work towards a cure. I'd be happy to ask someone at your local chapter to get in touch, if you send me your contact info. Also, please feel free to write back to me, if I can answer other questions, or if you'd just like to chat. Good luck!