



A Quick Start Guide to Living Independently with Type 1 Diabetes

Graduating from high school is a huge accomplishment and transitioning to living independently is an exciting next step! This change may be the first time you're managing type 1 diabetes (T1D) on your own. To help ensure a smooth transition to this new life stage, consider asking yourself the following questions and taking this thoughtful advice.

"I'm excited about what's on the horizon, but I'm nervous about managing type 1 diabetes on my own – there's a lot of information to consider. Where should I start?"

The transition from high school to living independently with type 1 diabetes will bring a lot of new learning experiences, challenges to overcome and adventures. Creating a diabetes management plan allows you to have a system in place to aid in managing your diabetes no matter what new or stressful situation you encounter. Your plan can include topics ranging from a written step by step procedure on how to manage lows, to steps to take if you have ketones and who to call in an emergency. Partner with your parents and/or caregivers to determine how they will continue to support you and what role they will play in your new management plan.

What diabetes supplies do I need to stock in my apartment or dorm room? And what quantity should I have on hand?

At a minimum, have 1-2 months of supplies available. Here's a list to get you started:

- Alcohol wipes
- Cooling pack to keep insulin at a safe temperature
- Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM) and pump supplies (and extra batteries or charger if needed)
- Glucagon
- Important information including parents/caregivers and endocrinologist contact information posted in a highly visible location in case of an emergency
- Glucose meter, lancing device, lancets and blood sugar test strips
- Insulin and syringes or insulin pen and needles
- Ketone testing supplies
- Low blood sugar supplies (glucose tabs, gels, fruit snacks, etc.)
- Medical identification bracelet or necklace
- Sharps disposal container
- Back-up supplies of all medications and necessary items



What do I need to know about having my own health insurance?

Navigating health insurance on your own can be tricky. Check out this helpful Health Insurance Guide JDRF created to make it easier jdrf.org/insurance



How do I manage my prescriptions and pharmacy supplies?

Discuss a strategy with your parents/caregivers to determine if you should transfer prescriptions to a local pharmacy near you. Create a plan to re-order prescriptions and supplies to manage your diabetes, and make sure you track when it is time to re-order so that you don't run out of anything.



Do I really need to wear medical identification and carry glucagon?

YES! The new people in your life may not be aware that you have type 1 diabetes. In an emergency, a medical identification bracelet or necklace and carrying glucagon could make a dramatic difference in keeping you safe and healthy. Even if you wear a pump or CGM, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are trained to look for medical identification.





Who should I tell about my T1D?

Ultimately it's up to you, but if you're going to college or have a job, it's a good idea to take the time to share information with your educators and co-workers about T1D, especially about high and low blood sugar symptoms and how it may impact your time in their class or at work (i.e. bathroom breaks, snacks, etc.).

If you have a roommate, it is wise to share the symptoms of high and low blood sugars with them, and what to do in an emergency. You may even show them how to use glucagon.

College Students:

If you will live on campus make sure that the person in charge of housing arrangements is aware you have T1D and understands what you need to be safe in your living environment. For example, being close to the restrooms or having a private restroom. When you move to campus, it's important to introduce yourself to your Resident Advisor (RA) and Dorm Director to inform them that you have T1D, educate them on the signs of low and high blood sugar, and what to do in an emergency.

Make sure that you connect with the campus health center to ensure you have access to expert care onsite in case of an emergency. Become familiar with disability services offered on your university's campus, and determine if you would like to register for special accommodations. Their staff serves as on campus advocates for students that are living with diabetes and other medical conditions. They work to help each student meet their needs through coordinating and implementing accommodations around academics, housing, dining and extracurricular activities.



I'm relocating to another city, how do I develop a new diabetes care team?

If you move to a new location, it's important to identify resources near you that can help reduce the stress of managing diabetes on your own. If traveling to appointments with your current endocrinologist is not easy, look for another specialist nearby. Certified diabetes educators (CDE) and registered dietitians can also be good resources for you to connect with, as well as your local JDRF chapter.



I'm looking forward to new dining experiences, both at home and around town. Any tips for counting carbs?

Carb counting apps and web searches are helpful, but chances are you already have a good sense of how to count carbs. Portion sizes vary greatly, so it's a good idea to refresh yourself from time to time on what an actual serving size looks like. Check to see if your school's dining hall and other restaurant options offer nutritional information.





So...what about drinking alcohol safely with T1D?

Start with a plan. Make sure your friends know the signs of low and high blood sugar, are available to help you test your blood sugar if needed and know what to do in an emergency. If you wear a CGM, you could consider sharing your data with a non-drinking friend while you are out so they are able to help you stay alert to your blood sugar levels.

Always drink alcohol on a full stomach or eat while drinking. Eat a big snack with plenty of protein and some fat before heading to bed. Consider setting an alarm to check your blood sugar a few hours after you go to bed.

Consider how alcohol affects your blood sugar and adjust insulin dosing as needed. You can work with your diabetes educator or endocrinologist to discuss suggested changes.

Check your blood sugar before, during and **after** you drink.

Wear your medical ID! Make sure the people you are with know you have type 1 diabetes and what to do in an emergency. Remember, glucagon will not help treat alcohol-induced low blood sugar levels!

If you are exercising (like dancing!) you may consider trying a basal decrease if you wear a pump or eat extra carbohydrates. Exercise and alcohol can result in low blood sugar.

Consider alternating with water or other non-alcoholic drinks.



Any other advice about making a smooth transition?

Community is important! Connect with your new JDRF chapter at jdrf.org to take advantage of Young Leadership Council networking opportunities. Participate in TypeOneNation Summit education events and learn about JDRF's Young Adult Conference and College Internship Program. Request to be paired with an Outreach Volunteer who can help you get to know the local T1D community. Check out the TypeOneNation forum at jdrf.org – it's a vibrant online community with opportunities to engage with others on questions you may have. The College Diabetes Network (CDN) is another great resource for you. To see if your college has a local chapter of College Diabetes Network (CDN), visit collegediabetesnetwork.org. You'll also find CDN has terrific "Off to Work with Diabetes" and "Off to College with Diabetes" guides as well as a separate version for your parents/caregivers.



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