

# WHAT SCHOOL PERSONNEL SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDENT WITH DIABETES

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

Diabetes is caused by the body's inability to make insulin. This causes a high sugar level in the blood. In children, it can be treated only with a combination of insulin injections, diet and exercise. Diet alone is ineffective. Diabetes is not caused from eating "too much sugar," and is not contagious. Children with diabetes can participate in all school activities and should not be considered different from other students. It is essential that school personnel have conferences with parents early in each school year to obtain more specific information about the individual child and his or her specific needs.

## HYPOGLYCEMIA (Insulin reaction)

One of the concerns during school time is that the child's blood sugar level might drop too low. This is called an **insulin reaction** or **hypoglycemia**. This situation is most likely to occur:

- 1) when meals or snacks are missed or delayed
- 2) having a strenuous activity just before lunch
- 3) during a lengthy field trip or field day activity

Students may exhibit a variety of the symptoms listed below

## WARNING SIGNS OF HYPOGLYCEMIA

- Blurred vision
- Sudden hunger
- Poor coordination
- Sweating
- Irritable/moody
- Abdominal pain
- Paleness
- Crying
- Nausea
- Headache
- Confusion
- Inappropriate actions/response
- Nervousness
- Inability to concentrate
- Drowsiness or fatigue
- Shakiness

## TREATMENT

Treatment should be given immediately and when in doubt, treat! Hypoglycemia is a medical emergency. Give sugar immediately in one of the following forms:

- Sugar – 5 small cubes, 2 packets or 2 teaspoons
- Fruit juice – 1/2 to 2/3 cup
- Carbonated beverage – 1/2 cup (not diet or sugarless soda/pop)
- Candy – 1/4 to 1/3 bar
- Glucose tablets or glucose gel
- Honey sticks

The teacher or staff should remain with the student until the student is more responsive and asks to resume normal activity. This takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes. If the child does not respond in that time, repeat the sugar treatment, then notify the parents. Once the child is responding, send the child to lunch or give a snack containing protein, for example peanut butter, a meat sandwich or a glass of milk. If you are questioning the child's "insulin reaction" and if a blood meter is available, test the child's blood sugar and give the results to the parents.

**HYPERGLYCEMIA** Sometimes the child's blood sugar will go too high. This is called hyperglycemia. It may be due to

- 1) illness
- 2) eating too much
- 3) a missed insulin dose
- 4) stress

The child will start drinking lots of water and will urinate more than normal. If these symptoms persist or if the child's blood sugar is high (>300) notify the parents.

## **DIET**

Diet is an important component of diabetes management. It is essential that the child be as consistent as possible in following his/her meal plan. Most children require a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack to prevent their blood sugar level from dropping too low. Preventing or forgetting a snack may be dangerous. The child may also need a snack if the class is going to have any strenuous activities. If possible, the child should not have a late lunch period. It is best not to have physical education scheduled just before lunch.