Children with Diabetes and School

Each school responds differently when they learn that a child with diabetes will be entering the school system. Children with diabetes, especially younger ones, may require some assistance with the details of their diabetes management while in school. If your child is entering the school system for the first time, or is returning to school for the first time with diabetes, here is a list of things that you should do before school starts.

For smaller children:

1. Meet with the principal to find out if the school has a policy in place for children with type 1 diabetes.
   - Do they have extra staff support available to help young children with their blood sugar checking? This will require decision making and taking action on the blood sugar.
   - Provide the principal with a “completed health care plan” with specific instructions for low blood sugar treatment and when you want to be called about the blood sugar.
   - Will the school have a designated staff & backup staff also for supervising food intake at designated times, and treating low blood sugar? (when child unable to reliably manage independently)
   - How does the school inform the substitute teacher about a child with diabetes in their class?
   - Does the school have an emergency preparedness policy? How does it work for children with diabetes?

2. Find out who your child’s teacher will be and set up an appointment to meet with him/her before school starts, or as early in the school year as can be arranged. This meeting is to:
   - Let the teacher know that your child has type 1 diabetes. Help them to see that is it different than type 2 diabetes, and what is required for your child. Discuss when & who will assist with blood sugar checking.
   - Explain the importance of eating meals and snacks at specific times, regardless of what activities (assemblies, field trips, etc) are planned.
   - Explain what happens for your child with a low blood sugar and how to treat it. You may want to provide the teacher with an instruction sheet that lists signs of low blood sugar, what to expect for your child and what to do to treat it.
• Emphasize that your child may not be left alone to deal with a low blood sugar. Your child may need help to check blood sugar and need prompting to take the fast acting sugar.

• Ask the teacher to let you know, in advance if possible, about any planned school activities (field trips, sports events, assemblies, hot lunch days or parties).

Provide:
• meter with sufficient strips, finger-poker and lancets
• Fast acting sugar (glucose tablets, juice) to be kept in the classroom
• Sports & activity snacks (fruit to go, juice, etc) to be kept in the classroom
• Emergency contact phone numbers.

Check regularly to replace supplies before they run out.

3. Plan to meet with any other teachers/school personnel your child will be with (librarian, bus driver, music teacher, gym teacher). Let them know that your child has diabetes, what symptoms of low blood sugar to expect and how to treat them. This is especially important for gym teachers, and bus drivers.

For Older Children/Teens:

1. Meet with your teachers and review your diabetes management with them. This lets adults at school know about your needs, and what you are doing (ex. Doing blood sugar checks, eating snacks and using insulin syringe/pen) If you are using an insulin pump show them what it looks like, so it won’t be confused with a cell phone.

2. Provide an information sheet that outlines your diabetes needs and what they can do to help.

3. Find out if there is a trained adult in the school who can assist in an emergency

4. Let your close friends know that you have diabetes. They can offer support, or get food or help if needed.

Last Notes:

1. No two children with diabetes are the same, with the same meal plan or insulin, or checking routine.

2. Always wear your medical ID bracelet or necklace.

3. You may want to meet with teachers at the start of each school year, as the information from last year may not get passed on—teachers change etc.

4. If you move, or start with a new school, meet with the new school as soon as possible.

5. Participate in any & all activities as you otherwise would choose, bearing in mind timing of food and extra blood sugar checking.
Resources:

1. CDA standards of care for students with type 1 diabetes in school
   www.diabetes.ca

2. Children with Diabetes   www.childrenwithdiabetes.org

Adapted from “When your child starts school” from www.endodiabbcchildrens.ca

SHR LiveWell Diabetes Program
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