

FACT SHEET

CHILDREN WITH DIABETES

What is diabetes?

Normally the human body makes insulin in response to the blood sugar level. In most children with diabetes, no insulin is produced and must be given by daily injection. Children with diabetes need to eat a healthy diet, exercise, and have fun, just like other children.

What level of blood Sugar is normal?

For people who do not have diabetes, blood sugar stays within a fairly constant range. For children with diabetes, doctors recommend keeping the blood sugar as close to normal as possible. (Blood sugar levels vary depending on the time since the person last ate. They are usually above 70 and below 150 mg/dL of blood.)

Managing childhood diabetes

Managing diabetes requires frequent blood tests, diet adjustments, and for most children with diabetes, insulin injections that depend on the child's activity level, diet, and blood sugar measurements. Some children receive their insulin via a needle that stays under their skin and is connected to a mechanical insulin pump. Early educators should discuss the child's care plan with the parents/guardians and the child's health care provider.

What is low blood sugar?

Both the rate of drop of blood sugar and the actual blood sugar level are factors in whether a child has low blood sugar symptoms. Blood sugar levels may drop for the following reasons:

- Not enough food was eaten to match the insulin given.
- The child exercised more than usual, using up available food.
- A meal or snack was delayed.

A child with low blood sugar or a rapid drop in blood sugar level may be:

Hungry	Shaky	Sleepy
Uncoordinated	Pale	Having a headache
Cranky	Disoriented	Crying for no reason
Confused	Vomiting	

There are several ways to check blood sugar with a simple blood test. The staff who will do the blood test should receive instruction from a health professional about how to do it with the equipment provided to the family for the child. To treat low blood sugar, give the child sugar in any of the following forms:

- orange juice
- granulated sugar
- regular sugared soda
- jam, jelly
- gel-type cake icing

If the child doesn't want to take these sources of sugar and is still alert, you may need to place some gel-type cake icing into the side of the child's mouth, and rub his cheek. Be gentle and careful to keep the child from choking.

If the blood sugar becomes too low, the child may become unconscious or have a seizure. If the child becomes unconscious or has a seizure, **call EMS**.

After you give sugar, try to have the child eat a small snack with carbohydrate and protein such as cheese and crackers or a peanut butter sandwich. Children with diabetes should never have their normal food withheld.

What is high blood sugar?

Sugar levels may rise for the following reasons:

- Emotional upset
- Illness
- Missing an insulin injection
- Lack of exercise
- Eating too much food with sugar in it

A child with high blood sugar may be:

- Thirsty
- Urinating frequently
- Complaining of upset stomach

If you suspect the child has a high blood sugar, check the blood sugar level. For high blood sugar, the child will need to drink a lot of sugar-free liquid such as water or sugar-free soda. Sometimes doctors want you to check for ketones in the urine with special urine test strips (dipsticks). Children with a high blood sugar levels or ketones in their urine may need an extra dose of insulin. Toilet privileges should **never** be denied or delayed for the child with diabetes.

Diabetes is a lifelong condition. The goal is to help children with diabetes to take care of themselves. The child's physician and parents/guardians will help guide you on the specific ways to care for the individual child.

For more information, consult the child's physician and health care staff involved with the child's care, as well as the parents/guardians..

Prepared by: Staff of the Early Childhood Education Linkage System,
PA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999

Updated by: Susan S. Aronson, MD, FAAP 2018