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## What is Diabetes?

**Diabetes is a chronic disease that requires close monitoring. There are two types**

- Type 1 Diabetes (also called Insulin Dependent) is most common in children.<sup>1</sup> People with this type of diabetes must receive insulin shots throughout the day and have a special diet.<sup>1</sup> Type 2 (also called Non-Insulin Dependent) is more common in adults, but it's prevalence in children is increasing.<sup>1,2</sup> People with this type may use pills or a special diet to treat their condition. Some may also use insulin shots.<sup>1</sup>
- Both cause the body to be unable to regulate sugars in the blood due to a lack of insulin, a hormone.<sup>1</sup> This can have very serious consequences, both short and long term.<sup>1</sup>
- High Blood Sugars are a result of too little insulin.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms include increased thirst, increased bathroom use, increased hunger and blurred vision.<sup>3</sup>
- Low Blood Sugar is caused by not enough sugar being eaten or physical activity.<sup>4</sup> Symptoms include shaking, sweating, irritability, headache, tiredness, behavior changes, weakness and confusion.<sup>4</sup> Without prompt treatment, blood sugars can become dangerously low and cause seizures, coma and death.<sup>4</sup>



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# SUPPORTING A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH DIABETES

*What Educators can do*



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## For Teachers

### What you can do to help students make healthy choices

Many teachers might feel nervous or frightened when they find out a child with diabetes will be in their class.<sup>5</sup> There is no need to be afraid; children with diabetes are usually able to participate in the same activities as their peers.<sup>2,5</sup> The following strategies will help you support your diabetic students.

- Get more information on diabetes.<sup>5-7</sup> If your school doesn't offer training, speak with your administrators about including training conducted by qualified personnel.<sup>5-7</sup>
- Know what your responsibilities are under the state law.<sup>5,7</sup> Are you required to check blood sugars? Give insulin or glucagon? Do you need special training first? Or do these tasks fall to the nurse?

### What you can do (cont.)

- Realize every student is different.<sup>6,7</sup> Each child may experience symptoms differently.



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- Communicate with parents, the school nurse, and the student regularly to learn about the child's needs.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Make sure that healthy, diabetes options are available for special classroom events or field trips.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Allow diabetic students to have unrestricted access to the bathrooms, water and snacks.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Don't draw unnecessary attention to diabetic children, Many children with diabetes already feel different to their peers.<sup>2,6,7</sup> Some experience depression and anxiety.<sup>2</sup>



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## For Administrators

**Administrators play a key role in promoting the healthfulness of the school environment.**

- Know if your state has diabetes specific laws that apply to schools.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Ensure that all staff receiving regular training on diabetes given by qualified instructors.<sup>6,7</sup> If your state has specific laws, make sure the training complies with those laws.
- Reach out to Community or School Dietitians to review food service menus and snacks offered have healthy, diabetes friendly options.<sup>6,7</sup>
- If your school has vending machines, make sure they offer healthy options. Place those with unhealthy choices outside of areas regularly traveled by students.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Make sure healthy options are at the front of cafeteria lines.<sup>7</sup> Use colorful labels to draw attention to them. Place less healthy options toward the end of the line, out of eyeline.
- Make sure students have a safe, private place to check blood sugar or inject insulin.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Examine school policies about medicine use on campus. Ensure these policies do not create unnecessary difficulty for diabetic children to get insulin or other necessary medicine when needed.<sup>7</sup>