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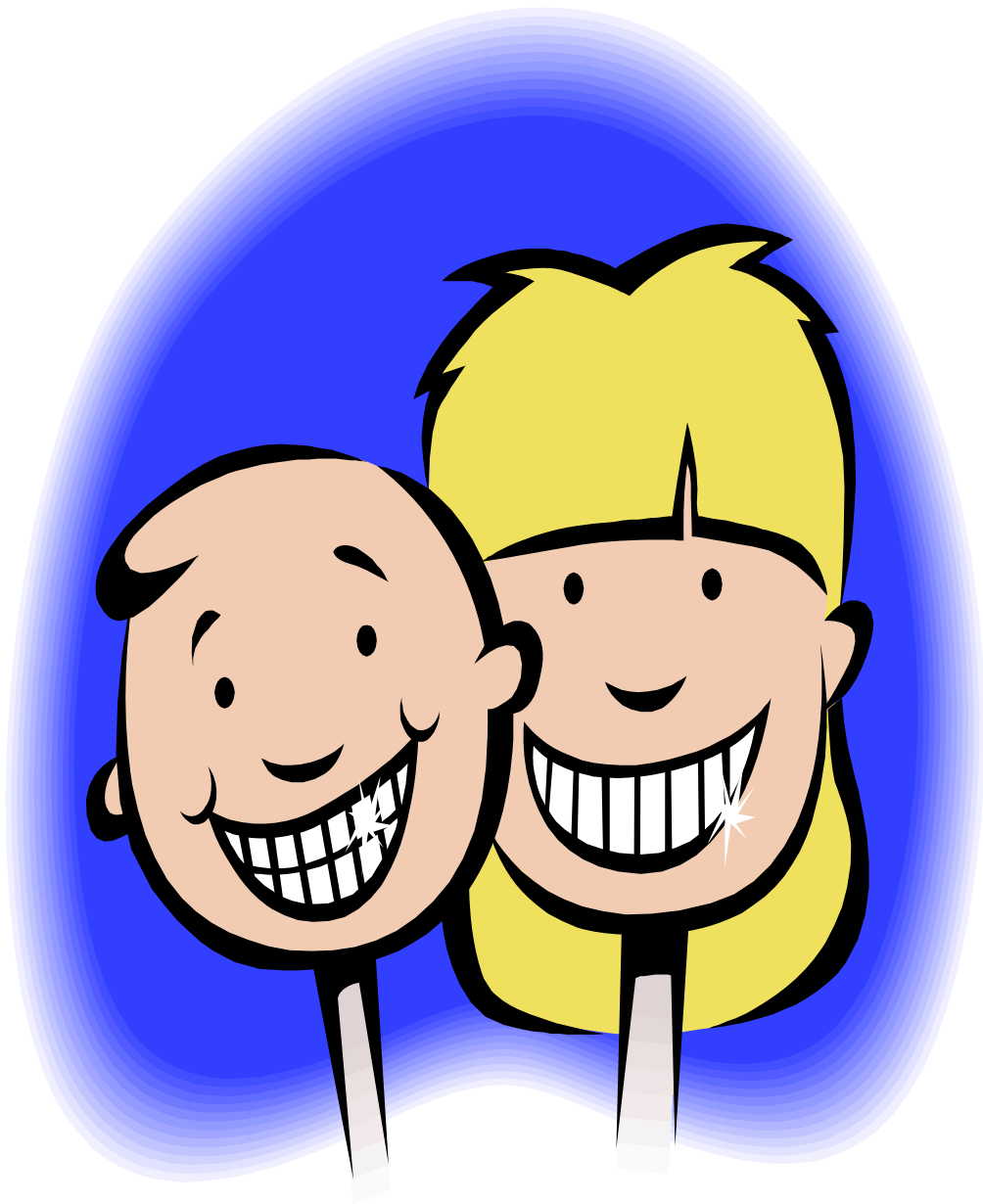
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Kids with Diabetes



What is diabetes?

Even though you can't see them, there are lots of different fluids and chemicals inside your body that help you move, think, feel, digest food and do lots of other things. One of these chemicals is called **insulin**. Insulin has a very specific job to do. It helps your body use the energy that you get from eating food. Everyone has to have insulin in their bodies or they can get really sick. If your body doesn't make insulin (or doesn't use it in the right way), you are unable to absorb something called **glucose** (see below), this means you have **diabetes**.

Diabetes may seem like a pain sometimes. You'll have to eat right, exercise, take your medication and do what your doctor and parents ask you to do. The good news is that if you do, you can control your diabetes and live a long, healthy life.

What is glucose?

Most foods contain something called carbohydrates. When you eat, your body turns the carbohydrates into **glucose**, which is also known as blood sugar. This is your body's fuel. When you don't have any insulin (or it doesn't work properly), your body can't absorb the glucose it needs to run properly. If glucose builds up in your bloodstream, you get what's known as **high blood sugar (hyperglycaemia)**. At other times you may have very little glucose in your bloodstream. This is called **low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia)**.

Both high blood sugar and low blood sugar can be very dangerous and you need to be careful of both. You know when you feel shaky, weak and tired? This means your blood sugar is too low and your body is saying "Feed me! I need more blood sugar to keep you going". Make sure you know the symptoms and how to treat them.



Diet:

A balanced diet is one of the most important parts of your diabetes care - and it's something you can control. Eating the right foods helps your blood glucose levels stay where you want them, so you have to be careful about eating foods that you haven't planned for. Talk to your parents and doctor about the foods you like. Then create a meal plan that allows you to eat healthy foods and still enjoy some of your favourites.

One of the first things you learn when you get diabetes is to avoid foods that make your blood sugar go high. When you have diabetes, your body can't process sugar the way it's supposed to, even natural sugars like those found in fruit. As a result, your blood sugar levels rise. That's why you have to be very strong when your friends are eating foods you know make your blood sugar hard to handle. As much as you may want to eat it, you have to remember what too much of certain foods does to your blood sugar levels.

It can be tough to eat the right foods, especially at lunchtime and after school when your friends are eating sweets and other snacks. But, the good news is that there are still plenty of foods you can eat that taste good and might even make you feel like you're cheating on your meal plan, even though you're not. And even your favourite foods can be enjoyed in moderate amounts - if you plan ahead and compensate with insulin.

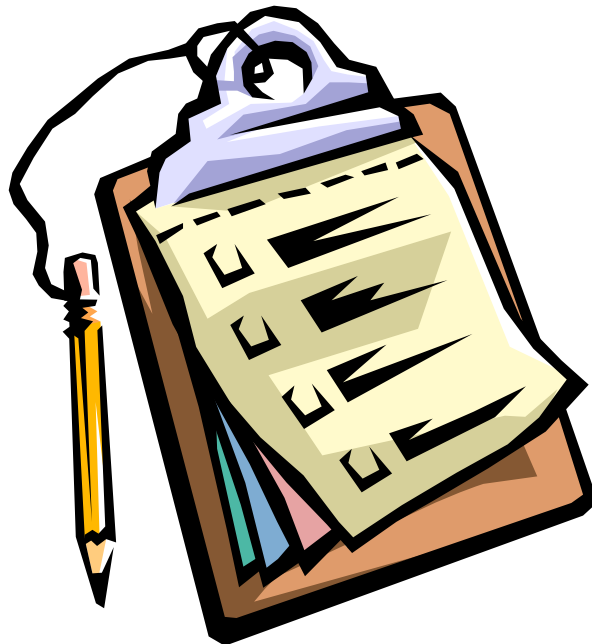
Keep some snacks of your own with you. Things like fruit juice, raisins, and sugar-free sweets and chocolates are sweet, but they won't affect your blood glucose levels as much as some sugar-based snacks would.

Types of diabetes:

There are different ways to treat diabetes, depending on what kind you have. Some people have to take insulin injections while others can take diabetes pills. Some people treat their diabetes just by eating the right kinds of foods and taking care of themselves.

Learn all you can about diabetes, make sure you share your experiences with others and get in touch with other kids who have diabetes too. You'll see you're not alone, plus the more people know, the better they understand.

What's best for your diabetes control is to plot a food, insulin and activity plan and follow it closely day to day. Then alter your plan as need be. This allows you to keep your blood sugar within the range it needs to be, which keeps your body working in tip-top shape.

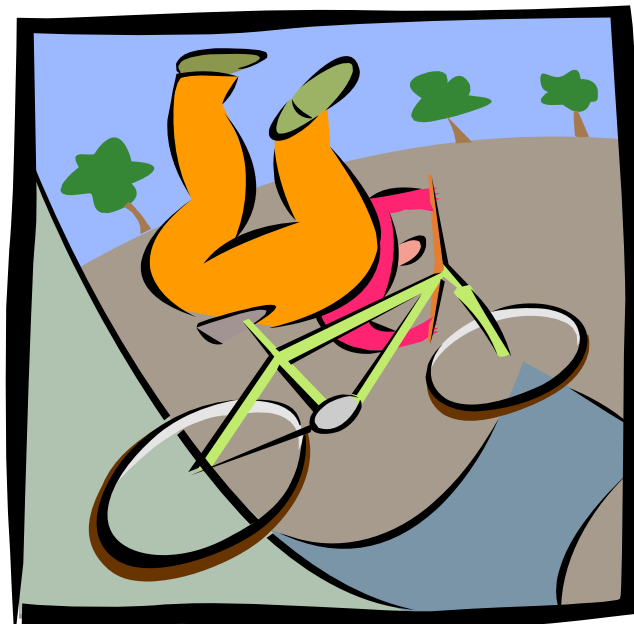


Going to school:

You may feel like you're the only person in the whole world who has diabetes, but chances are there are other people right in your school who have it too. It's important to remember that just because you have diabetes there's no reason why you can't do everything your friends and classmates do, including playing sports and other school activities.

It's also very important to let your teachers, school nurse and Headmaster know you have diabetes. They can assist you if your blood sugar level gets too high or too low, or you need to go to the doctor.

Being a child should be all about having fun. That especially goes for children with diabetes. The key is taking care of yourself so the diabetes doesn't get in your way.



Some things to remember:

Try to remember the things on this list when you go to school. They can keep you from feeling sick or help you get help if you need it:

- 🖨 Know where and how to get medical care
- 🖨 Wear identification, like a bracelet or necklace, this tells people that you have diabetes
- 🖨 Make sure you always have your medications, testing materials and snacks
- 🖨 Make sure you eat enough and try to eat at the same time everyday
- 🖨 Try not to get too tired on the playground or in PE
- 🖨 Give yourself injections on time and in the same way each time
- 🖨 Know what type of insulin you take

