

## Diabetes Information Sheet

Diabetes is a chronic metabolic condition in which the body does not produce or use insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that converts sugar, starches and other food into energy. Without insulin, glucose builds up in the blood, passes into the urine and is eliminated. This leaves the body without its main source of fuel.

In Type I diabetes, the body reacts to the lack of insulin by making more sugar. When the nutrients in food convert to sugar, the person's blood sugar levels become too high. A student with Type I diabetes must take insulin every day.

Type 2 diabetes is the result of the body failing to make enough insulin or use insulin properly. Managing type 2 diabetes includes lifestyle changes such as making healthy food choices and getting regular physical activity.

### Symptoms

Symptoms may include high levels of sugar in the blood when tested, high levels of sugar in the urine when tested, unusual thirst, frequent urination, weight loss despite an increase in appetite, blurred vision, nausea and vomiting, extreme weakness and fatigue, irritability and mood changes.

Hypoglycemia, seen most often as a complication of diabetes, is caused by too much medication or a missed or delayed meal. The symptoms of hypoglycemia include trembling, clammy skin, anxiety or irritability, sweating, dizziness, difficulty paying attention or confusion.

**Do not leave a student with hypoglycemia alone! Follow the student's emergency care plan.**

### Treatment

The goal of treatment is to maintain a blood sugar level that is appropriate for each individual. This involves testing blood sugar often, learning to recognize the warning signs of low blood sugar and treating the condition quickly, based on prior instructions from the doctor.

### Educational Implications

Fluctuations in blood glucose can affect attention, focus, motor coordination, strength, endurance and behavior.

A student with diabetes may need to leave class for a variety of daily healthcare procedures including blood glucose monitoring, insulin administration, a snack to maintain blood glucose levels, a bathroom break and problem solving with the school nurse. Medical appointments and illness may also affect school attendance.

A student may be depressed or angry about having diabetes. Some are anxious about the possibility of an emergency. Others do not like being singled out as different from their peers.

Bodily functions may cause a student to be unusually thirsty. Easy access to a drinking fountain or carrying a water bottle can help.

A student may require snacks to help control blood glucose levels. Keep parent-approved foods readily available in the classroom, in remote areas of the school, and with the student during after-school activities or activities off school property.

## **Educational Options**

Those students whose diabetes adversely affects their educational performance may benefit from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To qualify under IDEA, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of thirteen specific disability categories. IDEA entitles a student with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and an individualized education program, including individual goals, objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications.

Students that do not qualify for services under IDEA may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example learning, breathing, thinking, concentrating, walking, bodily functions). Under Section 504, a student is entitled to equal opportunity, and may qualify for a Section 504 plan that provides regular or special education and related aids and services.

A student with a health condition who does not require special instruction and related services can receive, as appropriate, a wide range of supports in the general education classroom, including accommodations, individualized health plans (IHP), emergency care plans (ECP) and local education agency supports.