

When Your Child Is Diagnosed With Diabetes

Parents' Questions for the Health Care Team

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Brought to you by the National Diabetes Education Program

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Having diabetes is stressful for the child and his or her family (Streisand, Mackey, & Herge, 2009). In the days and weeks following diagnosis, children and parents typically have numerous questions for their health care team concerning how diabetes may affect their family. School nurses play an important role in helping the child and family adjust to living with diabetes (Weissberg-Benchell et al., 2009). Although medical appointments are the best time to have questions answered, many families find appointments to be busy and overwhelming, particularly given the complexities of managing diabetes. As a result, families often leave their medical appointments with unanswered questions. While health care professionals almost always solicit questions from families, open-ended prompts, such as "Do you have any questions?", may not effectively elicit all of a family's concerns. Furthermore, even if parents do ask questions, they may not fully understand or remember the responses, particularly given the large amount of information presented during medical appointments.

Given the challenges of addressing the questions of families with newly diagnosed children, health care professionals can use several techniques to provide important information. Open-ended

prompts are a good starting point. It is also helpful to follow up with more specific prompts for questions (e.g., "Do you have any questions about the emotional impact of diabetes?" or "Are you concerned about managing your child's diabetes at school?"). The school nurse could suggest that parents write down questions before their medical appointments to help them organize and remember pertinent issues.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for addressing the concerns of newly diagnosed children and their families is to provide written resources. Written materials are advantageous because families can digest the information at their own pace. The materials can reference Web sites or other information of interest if parents wish to learn more about a subject. The school nurse could be an important source of such family support materials.

The National Diabetes Education Program's (NDEP) Work Group on Diabetes in Children and Adolescents has developed a list of some of the most common parent questions that can be effectively used to stimulate questions during medical appointments—when a child is newly diagnosed and later on as well. The list addresses questions ranging from basic topics, such as the different types of diabetes and the recommended frequency of medical appointments, to more complex concerns, such as when children should begin

taking responsibility for their own diabetes care. This resource also provides Web sites for parents and children to gather additional information if they choose. By ensuring that families of children with diabetes have the opportunity to ask questions, the health care team can provide effective support and information during difficult times. A copy of the questions is provided here as a ready resource for the school nurse to provide to families. Contact the NDEP to find this set of questions and other resources to help youth with diabetes and their families cope with living with diabetes: <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/teens/ParentsQuestions.aspx> or 1-888-693-NDEP (6337). ■

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Resources

National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP)

www.YourDiabetesInfo.org; 1-888-693-NDEP (6337)

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International (JDRF)

www.jdrf.org; 1-800-533-CURE (2873)

Children With Diabetes

www.childrenwithdiabetes.com

American Diabetes Association (ADA)

www.diabetes.org; 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383)

Figure 1

When Your Child Is Diagnosed With Diabetes: Parents' Questions for the Health Care Team

Parents of children with diabetes often have concerns about the disease, its impact on their family, and how to keep their children safe and healthy. Use these questions to talk with your child's health care team to learn about your child's diabetes care needs at diagnosis and later on as well. There is space for your notes under each question. To find out more about possible answers, link to <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/teens/ParentsQuestions.aspx>.

What are the different types of diabetes?

- Which type of diabetes does our child have?
- Will it ever go away?

What does this mean for other members of our family?

- Does it mean our other children will get diabetes too?
- What about other family members?

What are my child's treatment goals?

- How can we help our child meet these goals?
- How often will our child need to visit you each year?

What other health care team members can help care for our child's diabetes?

- How do we contact them?

How can we work together as a family to help our child?

- How can we help our child check blood glucose, take insulin, eat healthy foods, be more active, and learn about diabetes?
- Who can help us work together as a family?

What emotional issues might our child and family face?

- Will diabetes affect the way our child behaves?
- When do we start letting our child manage his/her own diabetes care?
- Who can help us cope with these issues?

Should we tell friends and family about our child's diabetes?

Who can help us if we don't have medical insurance?

What resources are there to help our child in school?

National Diabetes Education Program
www.YourDiabetesInfo.org
1-888-693-NDEP (6337)