

# 10 things school staff should know about type 1 diabetes

1

**Children will not outgrow type 1 diabetes:**

With type 1 diabetes, the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin have been destroyed. People with type 1 diabetes will always have to take insulin injections (until there is a cure). Changes in lifestyle or diet will not “improve” type 1 diabetes.

2

**Insulin is not a cure:** But it is the only treatment. Without insulin, people with type 1 diabetes would die.

3

**It takes a lot of work to manage diabetes:**

Children with type 1 diabetes usually look healthy. That’s because they and their families are working hard to keep blood sugar levels in a target range. They do this by checking levels frequently, and acting quickly when needed—such as adding insulin to account for a special treat, or having a snack because of extra physical activity.

4

**Technology is helpful, but it doesn’t work on its own:**

Some students wear insulin pumps to deliver insulin. A pump is another way to deliver insulin, and whether or not to use a pump is an individual choice. Other students wear continuous glucose monitors (CGMs), which take blood sugar readings every few minutes. But none of these devices works on its own. People still have to carefully monitor blood sugar, food intake, and activity, and make decisions about how much insulin to give and when.

5

**Blood sugar levels can change quickly:**

It’s important to check blood sugar often, because there are many factors that can cause it to change from minute to minute.

6

**Low blood sugar needs immediate attention:**

If a student feels low, or you suspect a student is low, act right away. Do not leave the student alone. Check blood sugar, and give fast-acting sugar as needed.

7

**High blood sugar means extra trips to the bathroom:**

When blood sugar levels are high, the body tries to flush out the extra glucose through urine. Children with type 1 diabetes should always have unrestricted access to the washroom.

8

**Kids with diabetes can still eat sweets**

(and anything else): Unless they have food allergies or intolerances, students with diabetes can eat anything that others can—as long as they have enough insulin. By planning ahead, school staff can ensure kids with diabetes are included in activities involving special treats.

9

**Even students who are independent may need help managing diabetes:**

As students get older, they take on more of their diabetes management. But they still need help from time to time, especially if their blood sugar is low (hypoglycemia).

10

**Kids with diabetes want to be like everyone else:**

Like other kids, students with type 1 diabetes want to fit in. They don’t want to be singled out because of their disease. Working with students and families to ensure kids can manage their diabetes and still feel included is an important role for school staff.



# How teachers can support students with type 1 diabetes

All students with type 1 diabetes—no matter how independent they are—need the support of trusted, caring adults at school. If you have a student with type 1 diabetes, whether for all or part of the day, there are many simple ways you can help. Here are some suggestions:

**Learn about type 1 diabetes.** Start by exploring the resources on [diabetesatschool.ca](http://diabetesatschool.ca), or have a look at some of the other resources we have gathered.

Provide parents with **as much notice as possible** about field trips, special events and changes to the school routine, especially where food or activity is involved.

Be familiar with the **signs and symptoms** of low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia) and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia), and know what to do in an emergency.

If a student experiences a low blood sugar before or during a test/exam, **allow a reasonable amount of time** to treat and recover from the low (they may need up to an additional 30 to 60 minutes to complete the task).

Be familiar with the student's **Individual Care Plan**. Know who at the school has been designated to provide day-to-day support.

Ensure that information about the student's daily tasks and emergency plan is available to **supply teachers**.

Ensure the student has **easy access to supplies** for blood glucose monitoring and treating low blood sugar (their "diabetes kit").

**Support the student's self-care** by allowing blood sugar monitoring at any time or anywhere, respecting the student's wish for privacy.

Ensure the student **eats meals and snacks on time**. Allow enough time to finish eating.

Know that a student **may need to eat outside a planned meal or snack time** to prevent low blood sugar.

**Talk to the student's parents** at the start of the school year (or right after diagnosis), and agree on a way to share information as needed.

Ensure that the student has **unrestricted bathroom access**, as well as access to water at all times. This is especially important when blood sugar is high.



# Low blood sugar

## What it is and what to do

**When blood sugar is below 4 mmol/L, you must act IMMEDIATELY.  
Do not leave a student alone if you think blood sugar is low.**

Low blood sugar is also called **hypoglycemia**. It can be caused by:

- Too much insulin, and not enough food
- Delaying or missing a meal or a snack
- Not enough food before an activity
- Unplanned activity, without adjusting food or insulin

### Some of the most common symptoms of low blood sugar are:



**Shakiness**



**Irritability/grouchiness**



**Dizziness**



**Sweating**



**Blurry vision**



**Headache**



**Hunger**



**Weakness/Fatigue**



**Pale skin**



**Confusion**

**See other side for steps to take when you suspect a student has low blood sugar.**

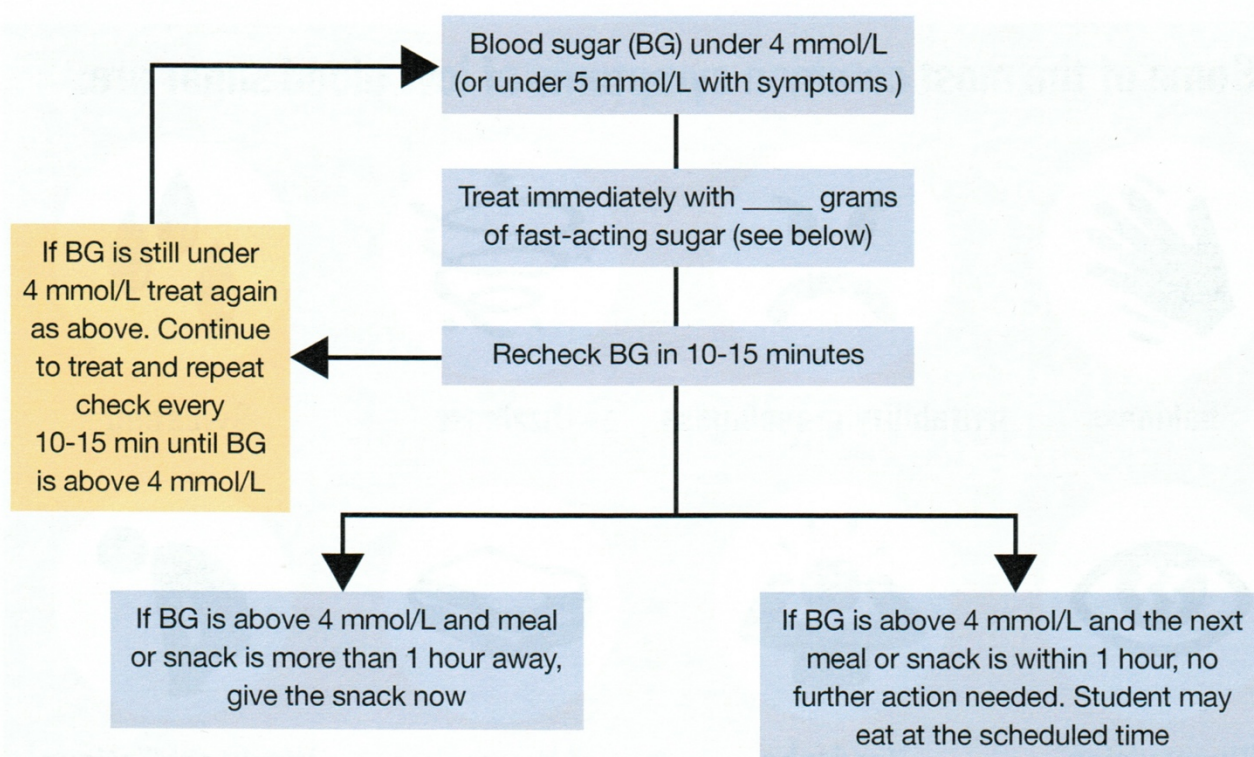


# How to treat low blood sugar

## Remember:

1. Low blood sugar must be treated **IMMEDIATELY**
2. **DO NOT** leave a student alone if you suspect low blood sugar
3. Treat the low blood sugar **WHERE IT OCCURS**. Do not bring the student to another location. Walking may make blood sugar go even lower.
4. Even students who are independent **may need help** when their blood sugar is low

## CHECK, TREAT, REPEAT



**Give fast-acting sugar according to the student's care plan: either 10 g or 15 g**

Amount of fast-acting sugar to give		
	10 g	15 g
Glucose tablets	2 tablets	4 tablets
Juice/pop	½ cup	¾ cup
Skittles	10 pieces	15 pieces
Rockets candy	1 pkg = 7 g	2 pkgs = 14 g
Table sugar	2 tsp / 2 pkgs	1 Tbsp / 3 pkgs



# High blood sugar

## What it is and what to do

High blood sugar (or hyperglycemia) occurs when a student's blood sugar is higher than the target range. It is usually caused by:

- extra food, without extra insulin
- not enough insulin
- decreased activity

Blood sugar also rises because of illness, stress, or excitement. Usually, it is caused by a combination of factors.

Students are not usually in immediate danger from high blood sugar unless they are vomiting, breathing heavily or lethargic. They may have difficulty concentrating in class.

### What to do

Check blood sugar. Even students who are independent may need help if they are unwell.

**Contact parents immediately if a student is unwell**, has severe abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting or symptoms of severe high blood sugar.

If the student is well, follow instructions for high blood sugar in their care plan. Allow unlimited trips to the washroom, and encourage them to drink plenty of water.

### Symptoms of high blood sugar



**Extreme thirst**



**Frequent urination**



**Headache**



**Hunger**



**Abdominal pain**



**Blurry vision**

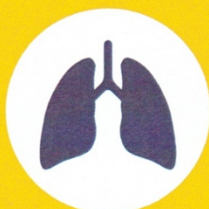


**Warm, flushed skin**



**Irritability**

### Symptoms of VERY high blood sugar



**Rapid, shallow breathing**



**Vomiting**



**Fruity breath**

*If you see these symptoms in a child without type 1 diabetes, please speak to their parents and suggest they see a doctor.*