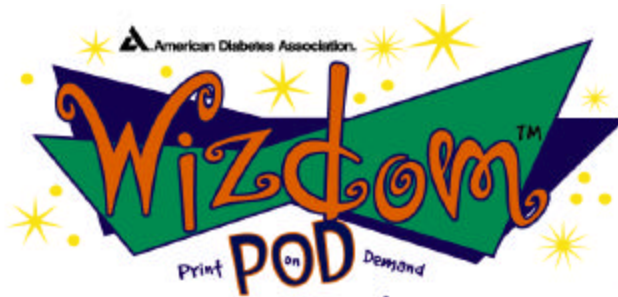


For Parents



More Wit and Wisdom for kids with diabetes
(and their parents)

Parents' Guide to Getting Out

Have you ever flown on a commercial airline? The flight attendant always starts the trip by explaining what to do in an emergency. "Put your oxygen mask on first, then assist your child," they always tell you. And for good reason. It's because the safety of that child depends on YOU keeping yourself safe.

The same thing is true when it comes to dealing with the child in your life who has diabetes. Most of the time you spend with diabetes is focused on the child. But if you want to keep him or her healthy, you have to keep yourself healthy first. Physically and emotionally.

Sometimes the very best way to deal with diabetes is to get away from it. For the good of your child, get out of the house. See a movie. Go for a run. Have coffee with a friend. Fall in love with your spouse all over again. Recharge your emotional batteries. Do what it takes to take care of the caregiver (that's you).

Of course, just because you're taking time off doesn't mean diabetes will do the same. So you'll want to make sure you're leaving your child in good hands. And that whoever watches your baby knows how to deal with diabetes as well. You're not likely to find that kind of person just anywhere. So let's start looking before

you check out what's playing at the movie theater tonight.

Let the Search Begin

How do you go about finding someone you trust to take care of a child so important to you and also deal with such an unpredictable condition? Start with the people you already know and trust. Turn to those people who have been through all this before or those who make diabetes their profession.

Your child's health care team is a great place to begin. They are a group of people who know your child's needs as well as the resources available in your community. They also know that when you're healthy, mind and body, you'll have the energy to take good care of your child. And that makes their job easier. Ask them for recommendations for finding a babysitter, and to share with you their experience and advice.

Support groups for parents of children with special needs are another great source to tap. You can find these groups by calling your local American Diabetes Association (ADA) office, mental health center, or United Way. If your community doesn't have a parents' group, talk to someone at the ADA about starting one.

Your local ADA may have a support group for teens. Like all teenagers, teens with diabetes need extra spending money. And with their knowledge of diabetes, you might find an excellent caregiver.

Nursing students can also make great caretakers for kids with diabetes. If you have any nurse training programs in your area, give them a call. They may have a list of students looking for work.

The best person to understand and deal with your concerns may be someone who knows firsthand what you're going through. Get to know other parents of kids with diabetes in your area. Arrange to trade babysitting responsibilities with them. For example, you take care of their child one Friday night, and next Friday, they take care of yours. Not only will you get some time to yourself, but you can learn from how someone else deals with diabetes.

Many Red Cross chapters offer training classes in babysitting. These provide basic caretaking and safety information. The person in charge of these courses may be able to refer you to a graduate of the program.

How Will I Know Who's Best?

Begin by listening to your inner feelings, your intuition, your gut. You have to find someone you feel comfortable with. Someone you trust with your child. You know your child and his or her needs better than anyone else. You are the expert.

Then listen to your child. Is this someone she or he "connects" with? Someone they warm up to? Attending to the special needs of a child with diabetes only becomes more complicated if the caregiver is a person your child

challenges or fears or just plain doesn't like.

When you find someone you think might work, have him or her come to your house to "babysit" while you are there. This gives you a chance to watch how this person gets along with your child. And it gives the caregiver a chance to watch the routine of diabetes care. He or she needs to have a chance to check their comfort level, too.

Trust your gut reaction on this. If you have that uh-oh feeling, keep looking. Find someone else to try out. If you have a good feeling about this person and your child responds well, count your lucky stars. Then ask her or him to come back another time to learn about specific care requirements for your child. Things like blood checks, snacks, meals, and insulin. The form at the end of this brochure will help you walk them through your routine and give them a place to record caretaking while you're gone.

But No One Does it as Well as I Do

You're right. No one will do quite as good a job of caregiving as you do. But with the right person and some advance training this can be a fun experience for your child. It lets them gain confidence that they can take care of their diabetes even when mom or dad isn't there to tell them what to do. And it can give you a much-deserved break.

With a bit of forethought, you can share the information needed to make this a relaxing time out for you. Even if this babysitter has diabetes, he or she will need information specific to your child's needs. And if the caregiver

doesn't have diabetes, you can begin with general information about the disease and then move on to the specifics. But remember, you are not responsible for teaching technical terms and processes. This is not Diabetes 101. So skip the scientific explanations and concentrate on providing a checklist of the specific diabetes care your child may need while you are away.

What the Caregiver Needs to Know About Diabetes

Since most of your caregivers won't be working their way through medical school, keep explanations simple. Caregivers need to know that diabetes is a lifelong disease that happens when a person's pancreas doesn't produce any or enough insulin. Insulin is needed for energy and growth. People with diabetes use insulin injections and/or diet and exercise to control their blood sugar.

Here's the most important thing they need to know: Diabetes is an unpredictable condition, especially in growing children. So even when appropriate snacks and meals are eaten, adequate exercise is done, and medication taken, blood sugar can take a dive or begin to rise. This is the reason for blood checks.

When a person's blood sugar is too low, it is called hypoglycemia (insulin reaction). Symptoms of this include dizziness, suddenly being tired, hunger, shakiness, weakness, behavior changes, and confusion. The opposite, when blood sugar is too high, is hyperglycemia. Symptoms of this include thirst, frequent urination, and just feeling lousy.

You can get printed information on diabetes from your child's health care team or the ADA (www.diabetes.org) if

you would like to share this with your babysitter beforehand.

What the Caregiver Needs to Know About Your Child

It's important for your babysitter to understand she or he will be caring for a child who has rules to follow— how much TV they can watch, what they watch, take a bath before bed, brush teeth, bed times, etc. This is a child just like any other, but this kid just happens to have diabetes. Don't lose sight of this. Remember, your child is just a kid going through a normal situation. Then, make sure everyone knows what to do if diabetes causes things to get "abnormal."

Provide your caregiver with specific training and guidelines for taking care of your child. He or she needs to know what to do when and how to record it. These topics are included on the form at the end of this brochure. You may want to go over the completed form with your child so he or she won't be tempted to try the old favorite "But Mom and Dad ALWAYS let me (fill in the blank with whatever it is you NEVER let them do!)."

- Meals and Snacks -- The sitter needs to understand food times and quantities are set to cover insulin peaks. Let them know when, and how much your child should eat, and stress the medical importance of following your guidelines. You might want to provide some alternatives in case your child refuses to eat what you had planned.
- Blood Checks -- Again, let the caregiver know when he or she should check. Make sure they will

allow your child to take an additional test if the child feels high or low. Let the sitter know how your child acts when you're there to check sugars. (Your child may choose to test their independence by not cooperating with the sitter at check time.) Encourage your child to take the lead and show the sitter how to run the machine. Make it a point of pride.

15 minutes on a Tropical Island

Taking a break from diabetes doesn't have to mean putting distance between yourself and your child. Taking a mental "vacation" can be refreshing and healthy, too.

Try this: Next time things are going well with your child's diabetes celebrate by allowing yourself five, ten, or 15 "diabetes-free" minutes. Grab a magazine article you've wanted to read but haven't had time for, watch a scene from your favorite movie, call a friend and talk about anything but diabetes.

- Insulin -- Leave written instructions on when to inject, what part of the body to inject into, and how much insulin should be given. Again, give your child a role in accomplishing injections, and the sitter is less likely to run into resistance.
- Hypoglycemia and Hyperglycemia Treatment -- Remember, not everyone has your perspective on the fluctuations of diabetes. The sitter needs to understand that 2 mg/dl lower than normal probably isn't anything to worry about, but 20 mg/dl is! Explain to them how low is too low, how to treat lows and highs, and when to call for help. Be sure to share the

signs you've learned that tell you your child's blood sugar isn't where it should be.

Your child is counting on you. For love and attention and care. It's up to you to make sure you can provide these important things and a lot of other not-so-important things. Like cooking, shopping, laundry, and, of course, transportation to the mall. You've got to take time to re-energize, to relax, and to enjoy YOUR life. After you find someone you are comfortable with, fill out the form below, grab your pager or phone, and go have a good time.

To Learn More:

- ★ **Wizdom:** If you haven't already, order a Wizdom™ kit for your family. They're free to kids with diabetes and are available by calling at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383).
- ★ **Magazines:** **Diabetes Forecast** is free to members of the American Diabetes Association. Become a member by calling 1-800-DIABETES.
- ★ This piece is one in a series. We have titles about school, family, diabetes & the law, and more. Call us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383) or download them at diabetes.org/wizdom/pod.asp
- ★ For more advice and answers, log on to our Parents' Place Community Forum at diabetes.org. Click on "**Community and Resources**," then "**Community Forums**."
- ★ Questions or comments? Send us an e-mail at wizdom@diabetes.org

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Information Sheet for Caregivers

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You can reach us at: _____

Phone/pager number: _____

We will return at: _____

Helpful neighbor: _____

Activities to be done or avoided: _____

Bath? YES NO (circle one)

Bedtime: ____ o'clock

Special instructions: _____

We did a blood check before we left. The result was: _____

Do these checks while we're gone:

Blood check at ____ . Result: _____

Blood check at ____ . Result: _____

Blood check at ____ . Result: _____

Meals and/or snacks:

_____ at ____ o'clock

_____ at ____ o'clock

_____ at ____ o'clock

Insulin injection at _____ o'clock.

Dose: _____

Insulin injection at _____ o'clock.

Dose: _____

These symptoms could mean low blood sugar (under ____): _____

If you see these signs, check blood sugar immediately and give: _____

Blood check Time _____, Result: _____

Check blood sugar again in 15 minutes. If it has not gone up to _____, **call us at:** tel. _____

Blood Check Time: _____, Result: _____

If _____ is extremely lethargic, unresponsive, or unconscious, **call 911** immediately.

Tell them the symptoms, that this child has diabetes, and the doctor's name is _____. Give them this sheet when they arrive.

CALL US AS SOON AS YOU HANG UP THE PHONE.

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