

Type 1 Diabetes in Children: Insulin

Type 1 diabetes means your child's pancreas no longer makes insulin.

When they eat foods that have carbohydrates, your child's body breaks the carbs down into a simple sugar called glucose. Glucose is absorbed into your blood, causing your blood sugar to rise. Insulin then guides glucose into your cells, where it becomes energy.

Without insulin, too much sugar stays in the blood.

And that can mean your child doesn't feel well. They may feel tired or hungry and be very thirsty. And they may need to urinate a lot.

Before your child was diagnosed, they may have needed emergency treatments of insulin and fluids to bring their high glucose levels down.

Type 1 diabetes must be treated with insulin.

The two types of insulin doses your child may need are basal and bolus.

With basal insulin, your child's body needs a constant small amount of insulin for energy, even while sleeping.

With bolus insulin, your child's body needs enough insulin while eating carbs to keep the blood sugar in a healthy range.

Insulin doses are given by a shot, pen, or pump.

Basal doses can come from a shot or pen that lasts throughout the day, or a pump that constantly delivers small doses of insulin.

Bolus doses also come from a shot, pen, or pump and are usually given just before your child eats a meal or snack.

As you hear new terms like basal or bolus, ask questions, and let the doctors know when you don't understand something.

The amount of bolus insulin your child needs depends on a lot of things, including the amount of carbohydrates your child eats.

Your child's body needs carbs for energy, but carbs also raise blood sugar.

Carbs are found in grains, starchy vegetables, fruits, and milk and yogurt. Carbs are also found in sugar-sweetened foods and drinks.

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Your diabetes educator or dietitian can help you learn to count carbohydrates in the foods your child eats.

And they'll talk to you about something called your insulin-to-carb ratio.

In general, the insulin-to-carb ratio is how much insulin your child needs to cover the number of carbs in their food choices.

You will also learn to balance this with the amount of activity your child gets. It can feel like a lot, but you'll get the hang of it.

With Type 1 Diabetes, you'll need to know how to use insulin to treat high blood sugar and what to do when your child has low blood sugar. Your child's care team will teach you how.

Something else you'll need to get used to is what other things often raise blood sugar which means more insulin. These include stress, sickness, emotions, and hormones.

Every day will be different. What worked yesterday may not work today. And that's okay.

With insulin, care, and time, you can help your child manage type 1 diabetes so they can live a healthy, happy life.

You know your child best, so if you have questions or concerns about managing diabetes with insulin, contact your doctor's office.