

Tips for Toddlers with Diabetes



General Information

Routines and habits are important for toddlers. The diabetes treatment plan provides routines around meal times. Your toddler should also have a regular bedtime with a certain routine (stories, songs, a cuddle).

Toddlers need and expect limits. Set fair limits and stick to them. Temper tantrums are common. Make sure that the acting out is not due to a low by doing a blood sugar check. Do not ignore your child during a temper tantrum. Instead stay with her and make sure that she cannot hurt herself. Use play so your toddler has a way to show what he is feeling.

Injections and Finger Pricks

Many toddlers will struggle and cry when you prick their finger or give an injection. These tips may make it easier:

- Let your toddler play with a syringe (with the needle cut off).
- Prepare the injection and blood sugar monitor out of sight.
- Give your toddler a short and simple reason why she needs the injection or finger prick.
- Allow your toddler to choose between two fingers or two injection sites. Do not offer too many options, as it can be too hard for him to choose.
- Try to stay relaxed when giving the injection. If you are relaxed, your child will be more relaxed.
- Be calm and matter-of-fact. State that it is time for your injection or finger prick and get it over with fast. You may have to hold your child down. Give her a hug and a kiss when you are done giving the injection.

Food

Toddlers can be picky eaters. Accept that your child's appetite and willingness to eat may change from day to day. These tips will help with meal planning during the toddler years:

- Try to set a routine of three meals and three snacks per day. Limit the length of meals to 30 minutes and snacks to 15 minutes.
- Do not give rewards for eating. If your toddler's appetite varies a great deal, talk to your diabetes team about a more flexible insulin program.

Low Blood Sugar

Toddlers do not know when their blood sugar is low. Know your child's signs of low blood sugar and tell other caregivers. If you cannot tell if your child is low, do a blood sugar check. If a check is not possible, remember: "If in doubt, treat".

If your child is more active than usual give extra food to prevent low blood sugar. If he is not with you, make sure his caregiver has a supply of rapid-acting carbohydrate to treat lows.

Pointers for Preschoolers with Diabetes



General Information

Play of all kinds is the most important life activity for a preschooler. Pretend that one of your child's dolls or stuffed toys has diabetes. Let him give the doll injections (with the needle cut off).

Preschoolers are creative in their thinking. They may think that injections, finger pricks and not letting them have food treats are punishment. Tell them these things are necessary to manage their diabetes.

Preschoolers want to do things by themselves. Make sure to include them in their diabetes care. Let your child help with setting up the blood glucose meter, pressing the button, mixing the cloudy insulin, and/or dipping the ketone strip.

Injections and Finger Pricks

Many preschoolers will struggle and cry when you prick their finger or give an injection. These tips may make it easier:

- Tell your child “needles and finger pricks sometimes hurt and it is okay to cry, but your job is to hold still so that the hurt will be over sooner.”
- Use a sticker chart for holding still during injections. After your child has received a certain number of stickers, you may choose to give a small toy or treat. The number of stickers should be suited to the child's age. For example, give a reward after 6 stickers for a 3-year-old and after 10 for a 5-year-old.
- Try to keep your child busy doing other things while you give the injection. For example, try deep breathing, wiggling toes, counting, looking at a book or watching TV.
- If you are going to bargain, do so before the procedure, not during.

Food

By age four to five, many preschoolers attend play school or kindergarten. They will eat snacks away from home and sometimes lunch as well. These tips will help with meal planning away from home:

- Talk with the teacher about your child's snack. It must be on time and all food must be eaten.
- Find out if the play school or kindergarten provides a snack or if each child brings his own.
- If you are packing your own snacks, involve your preschooler with choosing the food and packing it.
- If it is a snack that the school provides, you will need to tell the teacher how much food to give. If this is not possible, pack your own snack and have your child bring the school snack home. You can offer it later and work it into the meal plan.
- Ask the teacher to let you know about special activities and parties so you can plan your child's food ahead of time.

Low Blood Sugar

Most preschoolers do not know when their blood sugar is low. Whenever your child is low, tell her “you have low blood sugar.” This will help her identify symptoms of lows. Know your child's signs of low blood sugar and tell other caregivers. If you cannot tell if your child is low, do a blood sugar check. If a check is not possible, remember; “If in doubt, treat”.

If your child is more active than usual give extra food to prevent low blood sugar.