



Diabetes and food

Students with type 1 diabetes can eat anything their classmates can, however food and drink choices can affect their blood glucose levels and how they manage their diabetes. No food is off limits just because a young person has diabetes.

Students with type 1 diabetes don't need to be left out from activities that involve food, unless advised by a parent, carer or diabetes treating team. Notifying families in advance of a school celebration, cooking class or camp provides time to plan treatment changes.



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Carb counting

All carbs affect glucose levels and the amount of carbohydrate in different foods varies. Many foods and drinks contain carbohydrates. Even some that you might not expect, like milk.

All students using an insulin pump and most students using multiple daily injections will need to know how many carbohydrates are in the food they are about to eat. They will count the carbohydrates that they are about to eat and drink and then calculate how much insulin they need to take. The amount of insulin will change depending on how much carbohydrate they are eating.

Diabetes treating teams educate families to count carbs and determine insulin doses.

Families and students can measure their carbohydrate intake using "grams", "portions", "exchanges or "serves". All food needs to have its carbohydrate amounts measured before being brought to school, with each food item clearly labelled with the amount of carbohydrate using a sticker or something similar.

The method a student uses to count their carbohydrates and whether staff need to oversee food intake at mealtimes will be included in the student's diabetes management plan and the student's family and diabetes team should provide guidance. This is particularly so when the student is too young to read or count.

Links

<https://www.ndss.com.au/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-carbohydrate-counting.pdf>

<https://www.ndss.com.au/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-coeliac-disease-and-diabetes.pdf>

<https://www.ndss.com.au/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-understanding-food-labels.pdf>

Coeliac disease

Some students with type 1 diabetes will also have coeliac disease.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune condition where the body becomes intolerant to gluten. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley and oats. This means that students who have coeliac disease need to follow a gluten free diet, including foods used to manage a low glucose level (hypoglycaemia).

Student specific support needs will be detailed in their diabetes management plans.

Eating times

Timing of snacks and meals is important. Missing or delaying food can cause a low glucose level.

It maybe useful to include the school timetable in discussions with families regarding eating. Student specific advice should be included in the management plan.

Common reasonable adjustments

Schools might consider the following reasonable adjustments for a student with type 1 diabetes:

- Additional time before snacks or meals to check glucose level, count carbohydrates and determine insulin dose
- Supervision of a younger student to ensure food and/or drink provided from home has been eaten (reducing risk of a low glucose level)
- Allowing food or drink in class
- Communicating with parents/carers in advance of activities or celebrations that involve food.