

EXPLAINING TYPE 1 DIABETES TO KIDS

WHAT IS TYPE 1 DIABETES?

The human body is amazing! Every day it makes fuel to make it go. Just like a car needs fuel to make it run. The fuel helps us think, play and stay healthy. In order to use the fuel and make a car move, the car needs a key. The body's key is called insulin. Insulin lets the body use the food we eat, which gives it the energy we need to move.

If your body doesn't make one of those important fuels called insulin, you have a condition called Type 1 diabetes. In kids and people with Type 1 diabetes, since their bodies don't make insulin, they have to add insulin to their body. They will need to have several shots every day or wear a special machine that gives them insulin.

WHY DO KIDS GET TYPE 1 DIABETES?

In the United States, about 15,000 children and young people every year find out that they have Type 1 diabetes. Doctors and scientists do not know why some children get Type 1 diabetes. They do know that children can't 'catch' Type 1 diabetes from someone else—it's *not* contagious. So if you know someone with Type 1 diabetes, you should not be afraid to be around them—you can play and talk to them just like anyone else.

Although kids with Type 1 diabetes don't always look sick, Type 1 diabetes is a very serious disease. Kids with Type 1, doctors, nurses, moms, dads, family, and school nurses have to work hard at keeping children with Type 1 feeling good and safe. When a child gets Type 1 diabetes, the doctors will give them special medicine which they will have to take several times a day, and they will have to check and monitor their blood 8-10 times a day with a special piece of equipment. Kids with Type 1 have to do a lot of things each day to stay safe, otherwise they can get very sick, pass out, go into a coma or even die.

WHAT CAN KIDS DO TO HELP?

Unfortunately, kids with Type 1 diabetes will not get well. It's not like when you get a cold or the flu and you don't feel well for a few days, then the illness goes away. That doesn't happen to kids with Type 1. They will always have it.

Can you imagine how hard it must be to get 5 or 6 shots a day, take medicine all of the time, check your blood throughout the day several times? Kids with Type 1 have lots to learn and a lot of responsibility. It's not easy being a kid with Type 1 diabetes.

Because there is no cure for Type 1 diabetes, kids that have it will have to battle each and every day to take care of themselves, they have to be tough and brave.

