

# Off to College Tips and Resources

From the Division of Endocrinology and Diabetes

At Children's National

## Checklist for students with diabetes preparing for college

### Before leaving home:

- Gather your diabetes supplies
  - Extra insulin, strips, meter, batteries, lancets, alcohol swabs, syringes/pump
  - Sharps container
  - Ketone test strips
  - Items to treat low blood sugars (glucose tabs, glucagon)
  - Sick Day Kit:
- Thermometer, bland foods/liquids (saltine crackers, soup, Jell-O), cold remedies, sugar-free cough drops
- Get some form of medical identification (necklace, bracelet)
- Copy insurance card
- Learn and discuss what insurance will cover (emergencies, specific providers)
- Find a local diabetes care provider if possible
- Make a list of contact information for old and new diabetes team members
- Discuss how medication will be ordered/received (mail order, local pharmacy)
- Copy your prescriptions and necessary medical records
- Plan for refrigerator needs/use in the dorms
- Get necessary immunizations
- Create a copy of your sick day plan (guidelines for adjusting insulin, need for monitoring ketones and blood glucose levels, adequate hydration, etc.)
- Discuss typical topics such as managing diabetes with a hectic college schedule, alcohol use, and sexual health with your diabetes care provider and other trusted adults

### At school:

- Tell your roommate and Resident Assistant (RA) that you have diabetes
  - Be clear and matter-of-fact
  - Explain signs of low blood sugar
  - Review emergency steps for hypoglycemia (glucose gel) or unconsciousness (glucose gel, call 911)
  - Show glucagon pen and store in a safe place; consider teaching roommate how to administer glucagon
- Visit the health center on campus to see if they can help manage your diabetes (sick days).
- Be mindful of food and exercise
  - Have a Calorie King book or phone application available to calculate carbohydrates when making food choices
  - Get a copy of nutritional information from the cafeteria or online resource if available
  - Keep items to treat low blood sugar with you at all times
  - Locate options for exercise and find time to fit this in your schedule. Be sure to have necessary supplies with you during periods of increased physical activity

Revised 5/2013

Parents – Here are our top five tips for preparing for college and staying in touch with your teen when he or she is away from home:

- **Talk about communication now.** Set a plan for sharing diabetes information once your child starts college. Parents, you will not know everything, but you can jointly agree on two to three goals for communicating about diabetes management like downloading and emailing meter results every two weeks or touching base about supplies once a month. Keep it short and simple.
- **Communication works best when the time and place are right.** Don't expect your child to answer the phone at all times. There also are lots of options for communication (texts, email, online chats, Skype, and others). Work with your teen to identify the preferred methods of communication and create a schedule to communicate on a regular basis.
- **Troubleshoot any potential difficulties now.** Order all diabetes supplies needed for the semester – and whatever you think your teen will need, double or triple that amount. Things happen – it's easier if your child has access to that extra meter, glucose tabs, etc. With your teen, talk to the RA about handling diabetes emergencies and who to contact. Enter important numbers in your teen's cell phone now.
- **Be proactive in planning for emergencies.** Identify key resources at college including the student health center and local hospital/medical care. Let your child know that there is never a problem you can't solve together and he can come to you with any emergencies.
- **Don't lecture, but have a conversation.** Listen to your teen's point of view and assist with problem solving and handling challenging situations. Don't be too hard on your teen. Your child has a lot of wonderful experiences ahead – diabetes is part of college, but so are classes, friends, new schedules, and new activities.

### Additional Resources for Parents and Teens

- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF): Type 1 Diabetes in College  
<http://jdrf.org/life-with-t1d/college/>
- National Diabetes Education Program: Transitions in Diabetes Management  
<http://ndep.nih.gov/transitions/ResourcesList.aspx>
- Health Central: Weekly Blogs about Type 1 Diabetes by Dr. Fran Cogen, MD, CDE, Director of the Child and Adolescent Diabetes Program at Children's National Medical Center  
<http://www.healthcentral.com/profiles/c/651280>

Revised 5/2013