

10 things teachers should know about having a student with type 1 diabetes



When your student has type 1 diabetes, the body doesn't make the insulin needed to metabolise sugar into energy. People with type 1 must either give injections of insulin or wear an insulin pump to stay alive.

Basic info: Food raises blood sugar. Exercise and activity lower blood sugar.

1 An insulin pump isn't a cure

It is hard to have diabetes, even when I have an insulin pump. My blood sugars will vary every day and there is no such thing as "control" with Type 1. Please be patient while I deal with low and high blood sugars.

2 I wear super cool gadgets that help keep me alive.

My insulin pump and/or continuous glucose monitor may look like the latest iPod or mobile phone – some alarms even sound like a ring tone. Please don't take them away from me – you would be putting my health in danger.

3 Sometimes I need to eat in class

I need to keep glucose tabs and snacks in my desk (or pockets) in case of emergency. If go low, even a trip to the nurse's office could be too risky without immediate fast acting sugar.

4 I may not be brave enough to speak up for myself

I depend on you to put my health and well-being first. It's not always easy to speak up when I'm low or high and need to take care of diabetes. It helps to know you're looking out for my best interests.

5 I need immediate attention when I tell you I feel low

I may also need your help. Please give me a snack or let me check my blood sugar immediately. Don't leave me alone or send me to the nurse's office by myself. My body and brain won't be functioning properly and I could make a wrong turn or collapse in the hallway. I also cannot finish a test or complete my work until I have treated my low.

6 When my blood sugar is high, I use the restroom frequently

This will not change, no matter how old I get. Please be patient when I need to take multiple restroom breaks throughout the day. This typically means my blood sugar is high and my body is reacting normally to flush extra glucose. When my blood sugar is high, I also need to drink more to help it go down.

7 Please don't call me diabetic

Because I am defined by WHO I am, not by diabetes.

8 If I'm not listening well or following instructions, I may need to check my blood sugar

Please don't assume that my lack of obedience or cooperation has anything to do with my attitude. If you notice I'm not paying attention or am acting odd, gently ask me to check my blood sugar.

9 Thank you for being patient with interruptions in class

Checking blood sugar multiple times a day, adjusting insulin levels and treating lows or highs can be exhausting. Your compassion during these interruptions will help make school easier for me so that I don't feel like a burden to you or the class.

10 Some days are a roller coaster of highs and lows

Days that include low and high blood sugars happen. And when they do, I may feel terrible. It's similar to how you feel when you have the flu or have had too much alcohol.

