

TYPE 1 DIABETES

Tips for College Life



Some practical advice on managing
your Type 1 Diabetes for new
3rd Level Students

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Introduction

This booklet aims to support students living with Type 1 diabetes who are going to 3rd level education. It has been written with the support of the Diabetes Nurses in Sligo University Hospital and some input from 3rd level students living with Diabetes. Hopefully this booklet will help 3rd level students with Type 1 diabetes live life to the full while staying safe and healthy.



So, you are off to college!! Entering into college life is an exciting, challenging and perhaps a daunting time for you. It is a time of huge change, if it's your first time away from home, many familiar support structures may no longer be in place. Going to college might mean a move away from family and friends who are so familiar with you and how you manage your diabetes. You will miss your family home, a fridge full of food, family meals prepared for you and the support of your teachers and close family network who up to now would have provided you with that extra margin of safety when it came to managing your diabetes.

As part of college life you will be meeting many new friends and tutors who may not be familiar with Type 1 diabetes. You will have a more flexible routine and a more active social life. Your life will change in many ways and you will have to learn to manage your diabetes too as you make the transition into this new chapter in your life.

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of Darren Gaughan.

Before you go to 3rd Level College

Talk to your diabetes team about how you will manage and be responsible for your diabetes.

What clinic? Can I change my insulin times? What if I cannot get a full meal? What will I do if I get sick?

Do I have enough of everything?

How much supplies do you need, pump supplies, insulin, needles, blood testing strips, spare meter, sensors? Have I an up-to-date prescription? Have I to find a new pharmacy? Do I need to get a Frio wallet or a fridge for my room to keep my insulin cool?

What about additional supplies?

Extras for sick days, ketone testing strips & hypokit. Contact numbers of Diabetes team, student health centre, GP, helpline for insulin pump manufacturer etc. Can I put a medic alert on my phone or carry ID or wear an ID bracelet?

When should I get professional help?

If you are vomiting or have persistent diarrhoea, have moderate or large ketones in the blood or urine, or if you have persistently high blood glucose levels of greater than 16mmols/l despite using your sick day management.

Note: If in doubt - seek medical help!

What if I get sick?

Any illness will affect your blood glucose levels so remember to follow your sick day regime taking your normal insulin plus the additional quick acting insulin recommended on your sick day regime - see page 8. If your illness is not improving after 24 hours, seek an appointment with the student health clinic.

Ring your family, student health centre, diabetes team, if emergency ring 999 or from mobile 121.

College Life

- Do the paperwork and be prepared.
- It's a good idea to find the student office, and the DARE office to introduce yourself there. If Diabetes affects your attendance or you need an extension on an assignment the disability services will be able to vouch for you.
- Locate the student health centre, find out do you need an appointment or can you just 'walk-in' if you are unwell and need to see a doctor.

**THE ORIENTATION
PACK-REGISTRATION**

Telling your new Friends/Flatmates that you have Diabetes

Having Diabetes doesn't define you but it is part of who you are so it is important to tell your close friends and flatmates about it. Everyone knows someone with diabetes, it might surprise you how interested people are to learn more about it and how willing they are to help if they can. Others might want to share their stories too.

How do I tell

Mention it casually, if you are at ease about it, then, so will your peers. If they are interested you can give them more details, a brief explanation of what diabetes is, the need to test blood glucose levels regularly and give insulin injections or wear an insulin pump.



Don't be afraid to check bloods or take out your pump, your friends and flatmates will soon see how routine managing your diabetes is for you.

If there is a group of friends that you spend a lot of time with, you should let them know about high and low blood glucose levels, causes, signs and symptoms. Even if you never had a diabetes related incident where you needed help it is a good idea to let them know- just in case something unexpected happens.

If you are experiencing a hypo you might need your friends to get you a sugary drink or some carbohydrate snacks. Encourage them to ask how they can help if you seem unwell.

If you become confused, drowsy or unconscious, emergency services should be called by dialling 112 or 999. A close friend may be willing to give you the glucagon injection to treat a severe hypo should you ever need it. In such a situation they should know where it is kept, how and when to use it.

Should I tell anyone else?

You can let others know as the need arises, if you are involved in a sports club you should inform your coach and a few club members. You can let your lecturers know if you feel you might need to be accommodated in some way, during exams or if your pump or sensor alarms or you experience a high or a low blood glucose during a lecture. If you have a course co-ordinator let them know about your Diabetes and ask that they pass this information on to relevant lecturers.

Keeping your diabetes to yourself can be potentially dangerous. Telling friends will help to ensure you get the support you need when you need it.

Maintaining a Healthy Eating Pattern

College might mean a busy fluctuating schedule, so it is a good idea to plan ahead to ensure you maintain a healthy eating pattern.

- If it's your first time away from home learn to make a few basic healthy meals before you leave home. YouTube is great for cooking demos.
- If you have a busy week ahead consider cooking in bulk so you can freeze portions of meals that you can have at hand.
- Refresh your carb counting skills so you can guess-timate the carbohydrate content of foods when eating out. Download the carbs and calcs app on your smart phone for a quick reference guide.



- Keep some healthy snacks in your room in case food that is stored in a communal area is taken during an impromptu party.
- Carry snacks or a packed lunch if you are out for the day to ensure you have something healthy at mealtimes.



Useful websites

www.indi.ie

www.diabetes.org.uk

www.diabetes.ie

www.carbsandcals.com

What do my Friends need to know about Hypo's?

Hypoglycaemia means low blood glucose and in a person who doesn't have diabetes, the levels never fall much below 3.5 mmol/l. In a person with Type 1 diabetes a hypo (a glucose less than 4 mmols) can occur due to reasons such as too much insulin, unplanned exercise, a missed or delayed meal and after alcohol. The glucose level will continue to drop until some carbohydrate is taken. Glucose tablets, fizzy drink or juice equal to 15gms of carbohydrate is the best carbohydrate to take when hypo.



'Lift' formally known as 'Glucojuice' is a glucose drink that is ideal for the treatment of hypo's. It is free if it is prescribed on your long term illness book. It's a 60ml bottle and it contains 15gms of carbohydrate.

HYP0s can happen in minutes and need to be treated immediately.

REMEMBER you might find yourself eating less and rushing about more on campus, **SO CONTINUE TO:**

1. Be responsible.
2. Carry quick acting carbs with you.
3. Be aware of your hypo symptoms and treat as necessary.

For your own safety, it is important that your key friends /flatmates would know how to recognise that you may have a low blood glucose, what they need to do to help you if you need it, and where you keep your stash of quick acting carbohydrate (so they also will know not to touch it).

Yes, too much alcohol can cause a dangerously low blood glucose (see page 9)

'Hypo' is the name given to the symptoms which occur as the blood glucose levels fall.

HYPOGLYCAEMIA HAPPENS IN MINUTES.

When the blood glucose levels begin to fall the body usually triggers a number of 'warning symptoms' including:

- FEELING SWEATY OR COLD
- TREMBLING AND FEELING WEAK
- FEELING HUNGRY
- BLURRED VISION
- FEELING IRRITABLE UPSET OR ANGRY
- AN INABILITY TO CONCENTRATE
- LOOKING PALE
- FEELING DROWSY, DIFFICULTY IN WAKING UP

If nothing is done and the blood glucose level continues to fall the person will lose consciousness.

A person with diabetes should always have quick acting carbohydrate close by.

What can friends do?

It is always safer to treat as a "hypo" if unsure, even if it is not.

If time permits, do a blood glucose check to confirm.

If fully conscious - give 15 grams of fast acting carbohydrate i.e. a LIFT glucose shot, 150-200 mls* sugary drink (not diet version) or 5 glucose tablets.

When hypo (and fully conscious) the person with diabetes may seem reluctant to take treatment but you must ensure that they do.

If unconscious - lay person on their side to open their airway and call an ambulance. Do not put anything in their mouth.

*Brands of soft drink may change their sugar content so check the label to be sure of the amount you are advised to take.

ALWAYS CARRY IDENTIFICATION ALWAYS HAVE GLUCOSE CLOSE BY

Sick Day Rules

Golden Rule



It might be a while since you learned your "SICK DAY RULES" so take the opportunity to update yourself now so you will be more aware of what to do if you get sick when you are away. If ever in doubt call your diabetes team.

When ill, check your blood glucose level every 2-4 hours and adjust your insulin/food intake accordingly. Use more short acting insulin if your blood glucose is high or you have ketones (how much depends on the sick day regime from your clinic).

You still need your long acting insulin even if you have increased your short acting one.

If you are unable to eat, have snacks or drinks containing carbohydrate to give you energy.

Drink plenty of fluids (to wash out toxins and prevent dehydration).
Tell a friend that you are feeling unwell and ask them to check on you or accompany you to the doctor.

Make sure your diabetes sick day regime is up to date and you have it in written form to refer to.

Call the student health centre and make an appointment to visit in case an underlying illness warrants medical attention.

GET HELP IF

- Your blood glucose is greater than 16 mmol/l for more than 12 hours
- You are vomiting or unable to keep down any fluids in the last 4 hours
- Your blood glucose levels are below 4mmols twice in last 4 hours
- Your temperature is above 38°C despite taking paracetamol or similar
- You have ketones greater than 1.6 mmol/l for more than 4 hours –

GET HELP IMMEDIATELY

HYPERGLYCEAMIA means high blood glucose and if undetected can lead to Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA), a potentially fatal condition. Avoid it by NEVER STOP TAKING INSULIN and follow your sick day regime when ill. **Hyperglycaemia happens over hours/days.**


Alcohol and Diabetes

If you drink alcohol it is important to know the effect it can have on your blood glucose for your own safety.



When you drink alcohol the liver has to work to remove alcohol from the blood rather than doing its main job of releasing glucose into the blood to help with regulating your blood glucose levels. As the liver is kept busy processing the alcohol and it is not releasing as much glucose into the blood as it usually would, therefore, your risk of having a hypo increases.

Discuss Alcohol with your Diabetes Team so they can advise you appropriately.


DRINKING ALCOHOL INCREASES THE CHANCES OF YOU HAVING A HYPO DURING THAT NIGHT AND THROUGHOUT THE NEXT DAY.

Top Tips

1

DRINK IN MODERATION

3



HAVE ID STATING THAT YOU HAVE DIABETES, SUCH AS A CARD IN YOUR WALLET OR A MEDIC ALERT BRACELET.

4

HAVE A CARBOHYDRATE SNACK BEFORE GOING TO BED,

test your blood glucose before going to sleep and be sure to remember your long acting insulin if you take it at night.



5



INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SUCH AS DANCING OR PLAYING SPORT WILL FURTHER INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF A HYPO.

6



THE RISK OF A HYPO CONTINUES THE NEXT DAY AFTER ALCOHOL SO YOU MIGHT NEED TO ADJUST YOUR QUICK ACTING INSULIN. Set your alarm to ensure you wake up the next morning to have breakfast.



GLUCAGON INJECTION WILL NOT WORK TO TREAT A HYPO IF THERE IS A LOT OF ALCOHOL IN THE BLOODSTREAM.



2

IF YOU ARE DRUNK YOU MAY NOT NOTICE THE SYMPTOMS OF A HYPO SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU:

- do some extra blood glucose checks
- don't drink on an empty stomach
- carry carbohydrate (glucose tablets)
- chat to your friends about symptoms of hypos and how you deal with them.

Smoking and E-Cigarettes

Smoking is not recommended for anyone but for a person with Diabetes smoking can increase the risk of complications of Diabetes developing. E-Cigarettes or vaping contain harmful nicotine and other chemicals. Not enough is known about their long term safety and they are not recommended as a way to quit smoking.



Say no to smoking or for help with stopping smoking contact the smokers quitline on **www.quit.ie**

Taking “Drugs”

Legal highs may not be illegal but they are still unsafe.

Some adults experiment with drugs for reasons such as curiosity, relaxation, peer pressure or they want to feel better or different in themselves.

By experimenting with drugs either by inhaling, swallowing or injecting them they can intensify or dull the senses, affecting a persons judgement and reaction times.

Effects can vary depending on the drug that has been taken, subtle effects can last for days. Hallucinogens such as Cannabis can affect concentration and lead to disorganised thoughts, blurred vision and vomiting.

Steroids can increase the blood glucose levels, short term they may build muscle but they are associated with long term health problems.

Being under the influence of recreational drugs can affect a persons self-care behaviours which could be detrimental to a person with Type 1 diabetes so should be avoided.

For more
information please
see www.drugs.ie

Sex and Contraception

If you are sexually active it is important to act responsibly to protect your health and the health of others. Protect against sexually transmitted infections by using condoms every time that you have sex.

It is essential for any woman with Diabetes to plan a pregnancy to reduce the risks to both mother and baby. If you do not wish to become pregnant it is important that you use reliable contraception. If you would like to consider or are considering becoming pregnant you should seek pre-pregnancy advice from your Diabetes team. You can get non-judgemental support and information from the student health service about sexual health and wellbeing.



For more information please see www.sexualwellbeing.ie

Look after your Mental Health



Looking after your mental health is a huge part of managing any lifelong illness, your mind and body are linked so it is important to look after both. Stressful situations can affect your blood glucose levels. College workload, exams and looming deadlines can all potentially impact on your diabetes management.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with the daily challenges of managing your diabetes or are having difficulties adjusting to your new life, seeking support is important to help you work through your emotions. Talk to your family, friends, diabetes team or seek support from the student counsellor or from others living with Type 1 diabetes.

For more information please see www.jigsaw.ie or

www.spunout.ie

University/College Supports

Most third level institutions have Disability Support Services. The activities of these services vary from college to college, but they generally provide information, act as advocates and organise the provision of necessary supports for students. They often have an important role in creating a higher awareness of the needs of students among the teaching staff of the college, and generally making the college a more inclusive place for students.

Managing Diabetes and Exercise

For more information please see your college website under disability supports (for educational purposes diabetes is accepted as a disability).

Useful website for managing Diabetes while exercising

www.runsweet.com

www.excarbs.com

Driving and Diabetes

Having diabetes is not an issue for driving but you must inform the National Driving Licence service (NDLS) that you have diabetes. NDLS contact details are, email: info@ndls.ie tel: 076-1087 880. You must also inform your motor insurance company that you have diabetes and are on insulin. For more information on Driving with Diabetes contact Diabetes Ireland or the Road Safety Authority on email: medicalfitness@rsa.ie or tel 1890 406 040.

As you are at risk of hypoglycaemia you must take extra precautions:

- You must always carry your glucose meter and blood glucose strips with you. Check your blood glucose before you drive and every two hours whilst you are driving

[continued overleaf...]

- If your blood glucose is 5.0mmol/l or less, take a snack. If it is less than 4.0mmol/l or you feel hypo, do not drive and take appropriate action to correct your blood glucose level, and wait 45 minutes before driving



- If a hypo comes on while driving, stop the car as soon as is safe to do so. You must switch off the engine, remove the keys from the ignition and move from the driver's seat. You must not start driving until 45 minutes after your blood glucose has returned to normal to allow the brain to recover fully from the hypo.
- Always keep an emergency supply of fast-acting carbohydrate such as glucose tablets or a sweet drink within easy reach in the vehicle
- You should carry personal identification to show that you have diabetes in case of injury in a road traffic accident
- Particular care should be taken during changes of insulin regimens, changes of lifestyle and exercise
- You must take regular meals, snacks and rest periods on long journeys. Always avoid alcohol

More information on driving with diabetes for group 1 and 2 drivers is available from Diabetes Ireland. Telephone 01- 842 8118 or see www.diabetes.ie or www.rsa.ie

**UNDER 5
DON'T DRIVE**

Some Important Points

- Talk to your diabetes team as part of your planning for college life.
- Whatever you take for hypo's, buy it in bulk. That way, you won't think twice about sticking a handful into whatever bag or coat you grab. When you go to a party, make sure that someone you know will be there - someone who knows you have Type 1 diabetes and what to do in case of a hypo.
- Keep "in case of emergency" information on your phone, paramedics can access this information without unlocking it.
- Wear a medic alert bracelet or have a wallpaper screen on your phone stating you have Type 1 diabetes.
- Photocopy insurance and prescription cards, in case your wallet is lost or stolen.
- Have your sick day regime from your diabetes team in writing. Save it on your laptop or phone so it is accessible should you need it.
- Make sure you have a safe system for discarding needles and strips.
- Check your diabetes supplies every month. Be sure to check periodically and stock up before you start to run low. As a safeguard against running out of insulin, make sure your prescriptions are on file at a pharmacy local to your college.



Diabetes Ireland

www.diabetes.ie

Diabetes Ireland is the national charity dedicated to helping people with diabetes and provides a range of services which include:



- Support via its telephone helpline 01 842 8118 open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday or email info@diabetes.ie.
- Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- The following services are available at the Diabetes Ireland care centres in Dublin and Cork: Dietitian Consultations, Counselling Service, Podiatry, Orthotics and Footcare services.
- To make an appointment tel: Dublin 01 842 8118 or email carecentre@diabetes.ie or Cork tel: 021 427 4229 or email corkcarecentre@diabetes.ie

Useful Websites

www.accesscollege.ie/dare

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a college and university admissions scheme which offers places on a reduced points basis to school leavers under 23 years old with disabilities (Type 1 diabetes as a lifelong condition qualifies under this definition) who have completed an Irish Leaving Certificate.



Disability Access Route To Education

www.ahead.ie

AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.





Head Office and Care Centre,
19 Northwood House,
Northwood Business Campus,
Santry, Dublin 9, D09 DH30.
Tel: [01] 842 8118
Email: info@diabetes.ie

Cork Office and Care Centre,
Enterprise House,
36 Mary Street,
Cork, T12 H6NH.
Tel: [021] 427 4229
Email: corkcarecentre@diabetes.ie

Western Regional Office,
1 Wine Street,
Sligo, F91 RFK1.
Tel: [071] 914 6001
Email: wro@diabetes.ie

www.diabetes.ie