

SCHOOL NOTES ON MANAGING DIABETES

Rathi Jayabalan, diabetes nurse educator, Diabetic Society of Singapore, presents a checklist for parents and teachers to take note of when a child with diabetes is in school.

Special care for the child with diabetes at school is essential for the child's well-being. You will need to pay attention to his diet, exercise and blood sugar.

HEALTHY EATS

The child and his family would already have been advised by a hospital dietitian on the types of meals suitable for him. This is to avoid and prevent hypoglycaemia. Special arrangement can be requested to take meals or snacks during class. The school canteen can also help in providing healthy meals. I do know of a few parents who have sought the help of canteen vendors to cater healthier options for their children.

BLOOD SUGAR CHECKS

The child and parents would have been taught by the nurse educator or doctor to do blood sugar testing, when and how often it should be carried out. The parents must ensure that the teachers are aware of the child's condition and allow him to check his blood sugar level when required. In addition, the child's teachers can help by familiarising themselves with the use of the blood sugar meter, in case of an emergency.

HYPO & HYPER

The child and family would have been taught to recognise the signs and management of hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia. His teachers and staff of the school should be in the know, too, as the consequences can be serious and life-threatening. The child should also carry some sweets or sugar tablets in case of an emergency.

GET PHYSICAL

However, the child should not stop from participating in physical activities and extra curricular activities. He must have regular meals and snacks. If a reduced portion is taken, there is danger of hypoglycaemia during physical activity.

TOILET BREAK

The child should be allowed to go to the toilet whenever he needs to. Parents can also discuss this with the teachers.

CLASS MONITORS

His classmates can also be made aware of his condition, as the child may have to take a meal or snack and check his blood sugar during class. By involving them, his classmates can understand his situation better and help in an emergency.

EMERGENCY CALLS

Last but not least, the school should have a list of numbers (parents and the diabetes team) to contact in an emergency.

These days, children spend more time in school than at home. Most of them are required to remain in school after normal hours for CCA, thus making diabetes care in school very important. It is crucial then for parents to work hand in hand with the school to make sure the child's safety is well-looked into.

