Juvenile Diabetes: How to Identify It

In the United States, 17 million people have been diagnosed with diabetes. Of those, 1.4 million have type 1, often called juvenile diabetes, and each day 35 American children are newly diagnosed.

Usually the symptoms of type 1 diabetes develop very quickly in children, sometimes over just a few weeks. Often the very first sign is unexplained weight loss (despite eating more perhaps) and/or a yeast infection. Such an infection may cause a very severe diaper rash in young children or a genital yeast infection in a girl.

Other signs are increased thirst and more frequent urination, extreme hunger, fatigue, irritability and blurred vision. Talk to your doctor if you see any of these signs in your child.

If your child does have diabetes, your encouragement and guidance are critically important. This requires a 24/7 commitment on your part and may involve some significant lifestyle changes for your family. Here are some of the ways you can help your child:

✦ Encourage him to be active.
✦ Teach him how to make the right food choices.
✦ Make sure she wears a medical ID tag.
✦ Bring her into the process of diabetes management.

Staying positive is one of the best ways to help your child, but there may be days when you need help with that. Your faith community and your faith leader may offer just the support you need – especially as you begin this journey.

November Is American Diabetes Month

Prayer: Dear God, some days I am so anxious and fearful. Forgive me my uncertain steps. Guide me on my journey and fill me with hope. Amen.

Your Advocate

Dr. Farah Hasan

Dr. Hasan is an endocrinologist at Advocate Christ Medical Center.

“My first year of med school, I was fascinated by nutrition and metabolism, how biochemistry plays out in people’s lives, by the physiology of it all,” says Dr. Farah Hasan when asked how endocrinology became her specialty.

She is keenly aware that the rise of type 2 diabetes (also known as adult onset diabetes) parallels the rise of obesity. “Fortunately, research for diabetes is growing, too.” During her eight years of practice, Dr. Hasan has seen the technology of diabetes change dramatically. “Today a lot of help is available to manage diabetes. Many people now use the pump which allows continuous glucose monitoring.”

Dr. Hasan’s advice to her patients is to live in a healthy way. “Control weight. Control portion size. The key is managing diabetes. Every person – not just those with diabetes – should take responsibility for his or her health.” She warns patients to stay away from sugary foods and high fructose corn syrup in particular. “I ask them, ‘Why are you drinking pop? It’s not nourishing you at all!’”

Diabetes usually requires lifestyle changes, but there is no way to know who is ready to make the necessary changes and who is not, so Dr. Hasan gives each patient the benefit of the doubt. “You can’t have a preconceived notion of who will listen. Sometimes the ones I think won’t do it make all the needed changes! People constantly surprise me, so I always take the time and make the effort for each patient.”

- www.advocatehealth.com – Advocate hospitals have many classes and groups built around living with diabetes, including diabetes boot camp, holiday cooking with diabetes, support groups, self-management, and more. To learn more phone 1-800-323-8622.
- childrenwithdiabetes.com – Children write of their experiences w/diabetes.
- jdrf.org – Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
- diabetes.org – American Diabetes Association

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