



Topics in Living with Type 1 Diabetes

Making Halloween Less Scary



Making Halloween a treat for kids and teens with type 1 diabetes can be a tricky task. With millions of children across America “trick or treating” in search of chocolate, candy corn, and other sweets, it’s hard for a child with type 1 diabetes to enjoy this ritual with their friends.

However, this holiday can be a little less frightening when the day’s activities are planned properly. By being creative and setting some ground rules, parents, friends, and neighbors can maximize the Halloween experience for a child with type 1 diabetes so they don’t feel left out of the fun.

[Click here to read more](#)

Ask a Parent

Helping Young Children Understand and Cope with Diabetes

Q: My four-year-old was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes a month ago and has just recently become really apprehensive about shots. I would like some tips about giving shots and explaining diabetes to young children. She thinks she’s going to be over it in a couple days, like a cold. I’m scared to tell her that it’s never going to go away. Should she have counseling?

A: Hi, I’m a volunteer for JDRF and my son, who is now five, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes two weeks prior to his fourth birthday. I cannot offer specific medical or legal advice—I’m just a dad who is trying to help others make sense of this disease by sharing my experiences. I want to address your questions about the difficulties you’re having with shots and explaining to your daughter that diabetes is going to be a long-term challenge.

[Click here to read more](#)

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month



Log on to www.jdrf.org throughout the month of November for ongoing coverage of National Diabetes Awareness Month events, including World Diabetes Day, November 14.

Young Voices Video Contest

If you are a teen or young adult living with type 1 diabetes, this is your chance to tell the next President what can be done to help put an end to this disease. Go to <http://wdd.quickcompliance.net/> for more details. Contest ends November 1, 2008.

What’s New on the JDRF Website?

Continuous Glucose Monitor Trial Results Announced

A major clinical trial funded by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation has found that people with type 1 diabetes who used continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices to help manage their disease experienced significant improvements in blood sugar control. [Read the full story...](#)

Ask a Grandparent

Lending Support from a Distance

Q: My 10-year-old granddaughter was just diagnosed with diabetes. What can I do to help? She lives 100 miles away but I try to see her as often as I can.

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“Halloween was a hard time in our family because both my brother and I were diagnosed with the disease as children. It’s hard to watch other kids tear into sacks of candy, but with a little pre-planning, our parents managed to make the holiday more enjoyable for us,” said Dr. Aaron Kowalski, program director of Metabolic Control for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF). “Our parents made our neighbors aware of our unique situation, and they in turn made sure to have healthy alternatives on hand. Some even gave us coins instead of candy. We never knew the difference, and it saved us from feeling different from our friends.”

Following are some ideas for a happy and healthy Halloween.

- **Trade candy for cash or toys** – Parents can often allow some candy on Halloween for their type 1 kids, but they should also have their child exchange the bulk of the candy for a toy that they really want. Parents can also buy back the collected candy with a coin for each piece. Older kids may appreciate their parents making a contribution to a charity like JDRF or another worthy cause.
- **Plan alternative activities and treats** – Host a Halloween party and offer small toys such as glow-in-the-dark insects, Halloween-themed stickers, and cause-related wristbands as treats. During the party, you can make popcorn balls, hand out sugar-free candy, and other sugar-free treats. By placing the focus on fun and not food, the holiday can be better for everyone involved.
- **Inform teachers and nurses at your child’s school** – Prepare your child, teachers, and friends with information about type 1 diabetes before Halloween. The holiday can be a teaching opportunity about health, science, and diet. Some schools have used Halloween as an opportunity to teach students to calculate the carbohydrate counts for varied serving sizes of sweets.
- **Take inventory** – If you are going to allow your child candy, be sure to space out your distribution by having them pick out only a few things and having them eat one a day or on a supervised schedule.

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In my opinion, you should always try to be honest with your child and put things in terms that she understands. With my son, we remind him that the insulin shots help him feel better so that he doesn’t have to go to the hospital again. Our goal is not to scare him, but I think he understands and knows the difference between feeling good and feeling bad when he has high or low blood sugar numbers. We’ve also tried to reward him when he does a good job and let him choose what his rewards are. Now that he’s had diabetes for about a year and a half, we don’t reward him as often (the diabetes is just a part of our daily routine now), but we still will surprise him occasionally with something special.

We met with a social worker from the hospital when he was diagnosed, and she helped us all with different ways of coping. If you do seek professional help, I’d highly suggest someone who works specifically with children with diabetes and not just a general counselor. But all of this may be a phase that lasts only a week or two—there will be many ups and downs for everyone involved in your daughter’s care. We’re amazed at how well our son has handled diabetes and we hear that all the time from other parents, too.

Have you been in contact with a local chapter of JDRF? If not, I highly recommend it. It is so nice to meet and talk with others that deal with the day-to-day of diabetes. Through my involvement, I have made many friends that I can go to for support or information. Sometimes it’s nice just to be around other families who are going through the same things you are. We went to a professional baseball game with JDRF when our son was first diagnosed. It was very reassuring to be surrounded by families who were eating hotdogs, cotton candy, etc., and giving shots or using insulin pumps just like us! It helps a lot just knowing you’re not alone.

JDRF is a great organization whose focused mission is to find a cure for diabetes through innovative and meaningful research. You can participate in the annual JDRF Walks, galas, and other fundraising events that help fuel this research. Also, for newly

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diagnosed families, JDRF offers the “Bag of Hope” that’s filled with lots of great educational information for parents and kids. If you are interested in being contacted by JDRF, please let me know.

It does sometimes take a while (my endocrinologist said one year!) before you get to be an “expert” for caring for a child with diabetes, so please don’t get too frustrated in these first few weeks. It’s important to just do the best you can!

Please let me know if I can help you further in any way.

Ask a Grandparent

Lending Support from a Distance

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A: I am so happy you contacted JDRF. I am a volunteer and I am also a grandmother of a 21-year-old woman who has had type 1 diabetes since she was six years old. There’s a lot you can do to support and take care of her and to support her parents. Grandparents play a unique and very important role.

My granddaughter was diagnosed in the summer when we were all together on Cape Cod. I will never forget that summer. Even though we had some senior relatives that had type 2 diabetes, we did not have anyone in our family that had type 1 diabetes. It was a shock to all of us.

It is important for grandparents to be involved in the care of this disease. You will play a role in taking care of your granddaughter and also in giving the parents a break from time to time. Your most important role will likely be supporting her parents as they get adjusted to working with this disease. They will need strong, supportive, and comforting assistance without judgment.

I lived with this disease by taking care of my granddaughter as often as I could. I also live a distance away from her. It was so hard for me to stick a needle in her little body at first, but I got used to it. It was never easy for me to do the insulin shots, but I made up my mind that if she has to do this every day of her life, I have to do it, too.

Taking care of a child with juvenile diabetes means understanding how to give injections or use an insulin pump, how to check blood sugar levels, and when and what foods she should eat. You should also learn what to do to treat low and high blood sugars. As complicated as it may sound, believe me, it all becomes second nature after a while.

I think it’s also important to understand that your granddaughter’s care is primarily in her parents’ hands for now, and later will be in her own hands. Everyone deals with a new diagnosis of diabetes differently and has different feelings and ideas about the child’s care—try not to appear critical of any efforts your family makes to care for your granddaughter. I had a tendency to be over-protective since it was my first grandchild and I wanted to keep her safe, but later I came to see my primary role as supporter and cheerleader.

In order to get myself through all of this emotionally, I became active in JDRF, and as you can see, I’m still here to this day. It has been a great way for me to feel that I am doing something positive for her without interfering in her life.

The biggest thing for you to keep in mind is that you are not alone in this journey. Millions of us have walked and continue to walk this path, and although we would never choose to stay on it, finding each other has been one of those irreplaceable blessings of life. Please let me extend my hand of friendship, and that of JDRF, to you and your family. I will look forward to hearing from you again.

If you have a question for JDRF’s Online Diabetes Support Team, go to www.jdrf.org/diabetessupport.