

School Care Considerations for Students with Diabetes

The start of the 2020-2021 school year brings particular challenges due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Families are hesitant to send children with diabetes back to school because of the increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. On the other hand, we are eager for all children to return to school because of its important social, emotional and educational benefits. In addition, many families depend on school for childcare and diabetes care while parents are working. **We face a difficult question – should children with diabetes go back to school during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Based on the available data, there is not a one size fits all answer.

Families will need to determine the best option for them given:

1. Their child's diabetes control
2. Their school's plans for limiting COVID-19 spread
3. Whether or not an adult can be home to supervise learning and diabetes care during the day
4. The risk of COVID-19 for others living in the same household

Please remember that the COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, and we still need more data on COVID-19 in children with diabetes. This means any recommendations made now may change over time.

Here's what the data show so far:

- Children are less likely to be infected by COVID-19 than adults (JAMA. 2020;323(13):1239)
- COVID-19 infections in children are usually less severe than in adults (Pediatrics. 2020;145(6):1)
- Children under age 10 years spread COVID-19 to others less often than adults (Pediatrics. 2020 May 26:e20201576. doi: 10.1542/peds.2020-1576. Online ahead of print)
- Children 10 years and older spread COVID-19 just as much as adults do (Emerg Infect Dis. 2020 Oct. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2610.201315>. Online ahead of print)
- Adults with diabetes, especially type 2 diabetes, are at higher risk for hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 infection (J Diabetes Sci Technol. 2020 Jul;14(4):813)
- Adults with diabetes have a higher risk of DKA and hospitalization as their hemoglobin A1c increases (J Diabetes Sci Technol. 2020 Jul;14(4):813)

We still don't know whether or not children with type 1 or type 2 diabetes and COVID-19 have a higher risk of severe infection, but unpublished data suggest that hospitalization is more likely when A1c > 9%.

Whether you decide for your child to attend school in person or learn virtually at home, we are here to support you! Please call 901-287-7337 or message through our Patient Portal with any questions or concerns.

To help your child to stay healthy, remember the following:

General Health Tips (For Everyone in Your Household)

- Wear a face mask in public settings when around people who don't live in your household.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds each time, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Diabetes Care Tips (For Your Child)

- Be sure your child takes all scheduled insulin doses and checks glucose at least 4 times daily
 - Contact Le Bonheur if your child's glucose is frequently outside of the target range of 70-150. (Keeping glucose in the target range will help reduce the risk of complications due to COVID-19.)
 - Attend all scheduled diabetes follow-up appointments.
 - If your child is going back to school, bring their 2020-2021 school care plan (diabetes management plan) to the school nurse along with all necessary diabetes supplies.
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