

Type 1 Diabetes: What to look out for in pupils at your school

This guide for schools in Swindon covers:

- What type 1 diabetes is
- How diabetes can impact learning
- Your role in recognising the warning signs to help a pupil to be diagnosed and what these symptoms are
- What your school can do to help pupils and their parents/carers to manage type 1 diabetes
- How to access further information.



What is type 1 diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious condition. There are two main types, type 1 and type 2. If a child has diabetes, it is usually type 1 diabetes; their blood glucose is too high because their body can't make a hormone called insulin.

People with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin every day to keep their blood glucose levels under control.

There may be pupils at your school who have type 1 diabetes already and those who could display symptoms but not yet diagnosed. Your school is in a good position to recognise the early warning signs.

A child is slightly more at risk for type 1 diabetes if they have a parent or sibling living with diabetes 1. It is important to note that type 1 diabetes is not exclusive to children whose family members with the condition.

Learning impact

- Diabetes can affect a pupil's learning; it can cause difficulties with attention, memory, processing speed and perceptual skills if it's not well managed.
- It's really important that a child or young person is supported at school so they can manage their diabetes and get the most out of being at school.

Some children with diabetes will have more absences than other pupils. They may need to take time off for hospital appointments or feeling unwell. Clinic appointments with the children's diabetes team are routinely required four times per year. Additional contacts between clinics are usually with the specialist nurses.

Symptoms and warning signs to look out for

Type 1 diabetes, symptoms occur differently in each child. The symptoms of type 1 diabetes tend to come on quickly – over just a few days or weeks. This is especially true in children. It is important for a child to see a GP as soon as possible if you notice any of the signs.

The signs and symptoms to mainly be aware of are what are termed the 4 T's:

- Toilet – going for a wee more often, especially at night.
- Thirsty – being constantly thirsty and not being able to quench it.
- Tired – being incredibly tired.
- Thinner – losing weight or looking thinner than usual.

The 4Ts are the most common symptoms of type 1 diabetes but there are also other signs to look out for including:

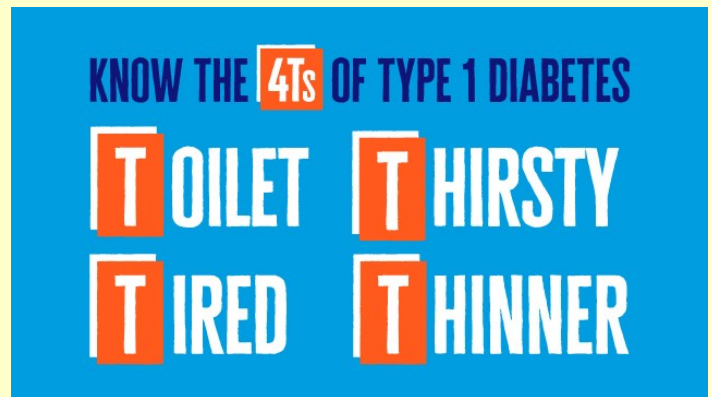
- genital itching or thrush
- cuts/wounds taking longer to heal
- blurry eyesight.
- stomach pain
- feeling or being sick
- sweet or fruity-smelling breath (like nail polish remover or pear drops)
- passing out.

Undiagnosed type 1 diabetes can make someone very ill, fast. It can lead to a condition called diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). In those with Type 1, the risk of DKA can be picked up early and the risk reduced by giving extra insulin and fluids. If DKA develops it will require hospital treatment and can be life-threatening.

Signs of DKA include:

- high blood glucose levels
- being very thirsty
- needing to pee more often
- feeling tired and sleepy
- confusion
- blurred vision

More information about signs and symptoms are available on the [Diabetes UK website](https://www.diabetes.org.uk).



What your school can do

The following basic procedures are in place to support pupils with a long-term medical condition, such as diabetes.

- 1) **Absence:** Discuss your school's absence policy with parents and carers of pupils with type 1 diabetes and how you can be flexible to support the child's attendance and learning.
- 2) **A medical conditions policy:** This would cover the actions that should be taken by your school to make sure a child is looked after, and that they are fully included in the day-to-day life of the school. In England, every school must have a medical conditions policy (Children and Families Act, 2014).
- 3) **Individual health care plans (IHCPs):** These plans are used to make sure a child's diabetes is managed properly during school time. The child's parents and their paediatric diabetes specialist nurse should be there when a child's personal plan is created. Paediatric diabetes specialist nurses will generally send schools an IHCP when a child is newly diagnosed, changes from pen to pump or visa versa, if a child changes school or if there are any other changes that may affect their diabetes management. The school should review these annually and if there is no change required, the care plan can remain in place.
- 4) **Work together:** Communication with the child, their parents and community diabetes nursing should be constructive and regular.
- 5) **Training and support:** Any member of school staff providing support to a pupil with medical needs should feel confident and competent in the management of diabetes, e.g., [Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation \(JDRF\) free basic and advanced online training for schools](#). Swindon Community Diabetes Nursing can supply resources and face to face training if required.
- 6) **Support children around the monitoring of their glucose levels throughout the day:** Blood glucose test results tell you and the child, exactly what their blood glucose levels are and what treatment they need to keep them in range of their target levels. The IHCP will advise on when to test a child's blood glucose and also how to do it properly and safely. Information about technology used to manage type 1 diabetes is available on the [DigiBete website](#) View a 4 minute video clip on [how to check a blood glucose level](#).

Swindon Community Diabetes Nursing

Swindon Diabetes
NHS

For pupils in Swindon - If there are any issues or concerns relating to a child/young person already with diabetes, or if you would like more information about diabetes, please contact the children's diabetes nursing team (under the Outreach Nursing Service) on 01793 604969 or gwh.childrensdiabetesteam@nhs.net.

If you suspect that a child/young person is displaying the symptoms of diabetes, they will need to go to their GP or be taken to urgent care at the hospital on the same day, do not delay seeking medical advice.



Further information

Diabetes UK:

- [Diabetes in schools – responsibilities of trained staff](#)
- [Diabetes in schools—resources including 'I have type 1 diabetes' cards](#)
- [Information for parents and carers](#)

Government guidance and template documents: [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at schools](#)

DigiBete: [A 2-minute video explaining type 1 diabetes in several community languages](#)

JDRF: [Free information packs and leaflets including a KIDSAC with a teddy bear](#)