

How to support students with type 1 diabetes

When a student has type 1 diabetes, at least 2 people in the school should be designated to provide support as needed. Sometimes called “allies” or “champions”, these staff members should receive training appropriate to the tasks that they will be involved in, such as [checking blood sugar](#) or [administering insulin](#).

Supporting a student with type 1 diabetes means having some additional knowledge and skill. It does not mean making medical decisions, which are made by a student’s family or health care team.

If you are involved in the care of a student with type 1 diabetes, here are some things you should know:

- There is a lot of support for you! You can learn about type 1 diabetes by visiting [Diabetes at School](#); a website created by paediatric diabetes experts in Canada. You may want to start by watching a few [short videos](#), then read more in-depth pieces that are relevant to the tasks you’ll be helping with.
- As students get older, they take on more of their diabetes management. But even students who are independent need help managing diabetes from time to time. That’s why all students need dedicated staff that are knowledgeable.
- Ensuring [regular communication](#) between the school and the student’s family is an essential part of providing support. Parents/guardians need to know when there is a change to the student’s routine (a field trip, schedule change, special event involving food/activity, and so on), so that they can plan. They may need to adjust insulin levels or provide extra food. Having advance notice ensures that students can fully participate.
- Sometimes, you may need to advocate for the student’s needs. For example, students with diabetes need to be able to check their blood sugar any time or anywhere, or to eat in places where students typically don’t have food. Some staff members may not understand why a student with diabetes needs these accommodations. You can help by explaining a bit about diabetes, or by showing them this [brief video on a student’s rights](#).
- Like other kids, students with type 1 diabetes want to fit in. They don’t want to be singled out because of their medical condition. Working with students and families to ensure kids can manage their diabetes and still feel included is an important role for designated support staff.