Type 1 Diabetes is becoming more common these days with more people finding that they have the condition. Before insulin was discovered in 1921, the outlook for people with Type 1 diabetes was poor. Nowadays, they can lead a full and active life as long as they take their medication and live a healthy lifestyle.

Symptoms of diabetes are:
- Frequently passing large quantities of urine which makes the person feel very thirsty.
- Substantial weight loss.
- Tiredness and generally feeling unwell.

No-one yet knows the real cause of diabetes. Scientists think it may be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Over 2 million people in the UK are known to have diabetes – that’s about 3 in every 100 people, so there will be a child with diabetes in most primary schools. But there could be as many as 1 million people in the UK who also have Type 2 diabetes but don’t know it.

No, diabetes is not an illness. It’s a condition where people have too much glucose (a form of sugar) in their blood. Glucose is the body’s main source of energy and diabetes is a condition where the body is unable to use glucose for energy.

Normally, the insulin hormone helps our bodies to use glucose. If our bodies don’t produce any insulin (Type 1 diabetes) or if we can’t use the insulin properly (Type 2 diabetes), glucose will build-up in the bloodstream to dangerously high levels.

Children who have diabetes can live an active and healthy life at school. Other children will hardly know that they have this condition. The Headteacher will have talked about this with the parents of a child who has diabetes. They will make sure that everyone who needs to know understands the situation. Teachers will give positive support to a child with diabetes. They will make sure that they are treated normally by friends and adults in the school environment. All teaching and non-teaching staff will know about a child’s diabetes and be on the lookout for any change in the child’s condition or any unusual behaviour that could suggest a problem.
What could make someone hypo?
There are several causes, for instance, if a child with diabetes has to wait too long for a meal and the blood sugar level falls. If they exercise too energetically without taking extra food beforehand, or get over excited or anxious then the same thing may happen. Usually a dose of something sugary will clear this up quickly.

How would I know if someone with diabetes was hypo?
You will know that someone with diabetes is ‘hypo’ if they become unusually tired or sleepy; if they become aggressive or badly behaved, bad tempered, unable to concentrate, confused, pale, sweating, trembling/shaking or start to act in an uncharacteristic way.

What should I do if I think my child might have diabetes?
Take your child to your GP who will carry out a simple test which can tell whether a child has diabetes or not.

I’d like to learn more about diabetes. Are there any books I can read?
Yes, you’ll probably find these two books in the children’s section of your local library. If not, they can order them for you.

LIVING WITH DIABETES

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What about websites?
There are lots of helpful sites. Here are just a few:
- www.iddtinternational.org
- www.diabetes.org.uk
- www.diabetes.co.uk
- www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/diabetes
- www.medinfo.co.uk/conditions/diabetes.html
- www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/healthandsocialcaretopics/diabetes/fs/en
- www.diabetologists-abcd.org.uk

What should I do if a child with diabetes becomes hypo at my house?
Here are some simple do’s and don’ts:

DO’S
• Do send for help from the child’s parent or telephone a doctor.
• Do give the child a sugary drink or food and stay with them.
• Do comfort and reassure them.
• Do remember that they will be embarrassed and feel anxious as they are not in their own home.

DON’TS
• Don’t leave them alone.
• Don’t take them into another room, care for them where they are.
• Don’t let other children crowd around them.

Is there anything else I should know?
The important thing to remember is that diabetes is not an illness and to treat anyone with diabetes as normal and healthy.

INSULIN DEPENDENT DIABETES TRUST
Helpline: 01604 622837
Email: enquiries@iddtinternational.org
Website: www.iddtinternational.org