

Taking control of diabetes



Diabetes is on the rise. In Canada, fifteen out of every 100,000 children develop type 1 diabetes every year. What causes the disease is unknown, but research is ongoing to determine the cause and to find a cure.

We can't cure diabetes but we can control it. The survival of people with diabetes depends on daily injections of insulin for the rest of their lives. They also need to have regular blood and urine tests, and learn to balance insulin, exercise and food. This is the only way to keep diabetes under control.

The Diabetes Clinic at The Montreal Children's Hospital of the McGill University Health Centre follows more than 600 families with children who have diabetes. The goal of the clinic is to make sure these children develop normally and live full lives. Their families receive information and counseling from a team made up of eight doctors, three nurses, three dietitians and a social worker. A psychiatrist and a psychologist can also be called on when needed.

This team does everything it can to offer the families of children with diabetes all the emotional and medical support they need. The team members are in frequent phone contact with families, who can consult with the nurses on an as-needed basis. Families meet with the endocrinologist every three months; in addition to this, the clinic staff also see each family once a year for a full diabetes review. Education is ongoing, mostly one-on-one with families or in small groups.

Diabetes, its symptoms and treatment

What is diabetes?

People with diabetes don't produce enough insulin to control the sugar in their blood.

What are the symptoms?

- frequent urination
- thirst
- fatigue
- weight loss
- stomach pain, nausea/vomiting
- rapid breathing
- fruit-scented breath

A child with diabetes taking insulin can also suffer from blood sugar that's too low (hypoglycemia). These episodes are temporary and need to be treated with fast-acting sugar.

What causes hypoglycemia?

- a missed or late meal
- strenuous exercise without enough food
- too much insulin
- vomiting

What can be done to treat diabetes?

Children with diabetes need to work constantly to control the disease so it doesn't control them. A daily routine includes:

- blood sugar tests (four times a day)
- injections of insulin
- regular, healthy meals
- regular exercise

Children with diabetes must also undergo:

- regular blood and urine tests
- regular visits to The MCH Diabetes Clinic



Children with diabetes must carry special identification with them at all times so they can get the right help if their diabetes is out of control.

