

'Schoolies' Week

Information for Health Professionals

The tradition of young people going away with their friends for a week after their final year at school usually causes anxiety for most families but If they are parents of a teenager with diabetes this anxiety is ever greater. Often this is the first time that their teenager will be away from home without parental or adult supervision.

It is important to ensure that teenagers who are heading to 'schoolies' week receive education and advice on how to manage the following issues and how they impact on diabetes control:

- Having 'no set' plans
- Timing of injections when 'sleeping in'
- Alcohol consumption
- Management of diabetes during a 'hang-over'
- Sick day management
- sexual issues
- general safety issues for all teenagers (including drug taking)

By educating teenagers on how to deal with these issues, they will be better equipped to act appropriately if these situations arise.

Having No Set Plans

For most teenagers 'schoolies' week means 'hanging out' with their friends and not having any set plans. They may intend to go somewhere and end up at a totally different place. You need to encourage these young people to be prepared for anything by ensuring they carry their insulin, BGL meter and some food with them whenever they go out.

'Sleeping In'

Schoolies week is about staying up late partying and sleeping in. Having insulin doses later than normal is usually not a problem. Most teenagers have already had experience with managing their diabetes after sleeping-in. The most important thing for them to remember is not to miss any injections and to make sure they have their short or rapid acting insulin at the same time as they eat a meal. It is really important for them to check their Blood Glucose Level's (BGL's) regularly.

Alcohol Consumption

Underage drinking is not recommended for any teenager and should not be encouraged. However, it is important for teenagers with diabetes to be aware of how alcohol can impact on their diabetes management. They need to be aware of the following information:

- alcohol, particularly sweet alcohol drinks can **initially** raise blood glucose levels and later cause them to fall
- alcohol may inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of a severe 'hypo'
- alcohol can mask the early symptoms of a hypoglycaemia
- alcohol can lead to confusion which may affect the ability to manage a 'hypo' and may cause insulin to be forgotten
- the effects of alcohol can lead to people mistaking the signs of a severe 'hypo' (reduced level of consciousness) with being drunk.

The following precautions need to be taken by the teenager if they are consuming alcohol:-

- drink in moderation
- avoid 'binge' drinking
- do not substitute alcohol for food
- monitor blood glucose levels regularly, particularly prior to bed
- do not drink alcohol to excess as this may cause vomiting
- drink low-alcohol beers or wine rather than spirits
- be encouraged to eat carbohydrate while consuming alcohol
- eat some carbohydrate before going to bed
- if nausea prevents eating, insulin must **never** be stopped. A 'Sick Day' plan should be commenced.

Note: Even if 'hung over' and food can't be eaten then a reduced dose of insulin may be needed but **never** stopped. During this time blood glucose testing needs to be performed regularly and they should commence a 'Sick Day' plan.

Alcohol and Sex

Alcohol impairs judgement and teenagers are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual practices when they have been drinking. Associated risks include:

- casual sexual encounters
- exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and or pregnancy
- date rape

It is essential that parents have open communication with their teenager about sexual activity and the risks involved in having unprotected sex.

Hangovers

For hangovers the following advice should be given:

- Still have insulin even if they are feeling 'sick' or vomiting and can't eat. Insulin must **never** be stopped.
- Ensure they have a written 'Sick Day' Plan which can be used if to guide them if they are hung over
- Continue to monitor BGL's regularly. They need to set an alarm (on their mobile phone) in case they fall asleep so they will wake in a couple of hours to repeat the BGL
- Seek medical attention if vomiting continues.

Note: Even if 'hung over' and food can't be eaten then a reduced dose of insulin may be needed but **never** stopped. During this time blood glucose testing needs to be performed regularly and they should commence a 'Sick Day' plan.

Ideally: A written plan for 'hangovers' and 'sick days' should be developed with the teenager before going to 'schoolies week'.

Drug Taking

Drug taking, whether on an occasional or regular basis, is likely to impair a young person's decision making regarding their diabetes management.

The specific issues with drug taking in a teenager with diabetes are:

- most recreation drugs alter mood, perception and cognitive ability
- a decreased interest in routines e.g. injection taking and eating
- an increased risk of hypoglycaemia being ignored or misinterpreted
- reduced appetite which can lead to hypoglycaemia (except when using marijuana)

(adapted from the Clinical practice guidelines: Type 1 diabetes in children and adolescents, 2005)

In the case of marijuana, appetite can be increased (known as the 'munchies'). Marijuana has a powerful anti-emetic effect and may disguise symptoms of ketoacidosis (DKA) such as nausea and vomiting. This can result in the teenager presenting later with DKA which can be life threatening.

Education Requirements:

'Shoolies Week'

Topic	Content
<i>Alcohol and Diabetes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- explain the effects of alcohol on the brain- explain the impact alcohol has on diabetes control- explain the relationship between alcohol and hypoglycaemia- discuss strategies to minimise the impact of drinking alcohol on diabetes control specifically prevention of hypoglycaemia
<i>'Hangovers' and Sleep Deprivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- discuss strategies to manage diabetes if 'hung over'- discuss 'sick day' action plan- explain the effects of sleep deprivation on diabetes control- discuss strategies to minimise the impact of sleep deprivation on diabetes control
<i>Drug Taking and Diabetes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- explain the effects of casual drug taking on diabetes control- explain the long-term implications if taking drugs regularly
<i>Alcohol and Sex</i>	<p>Note: It is not the primary responsibility of a diabetes health professional to educate teenagers on sexual issues. However, it is not practical to disregard these issues and their potential impact on diabetes control (e.g. acute complications such as hypoglycaemia and the risk of a sexually transmitted disease or unplanned pregnancy)</p> <p>The advice provided to each teenager must be individualised to their specific circumstances.</p>

Ensure the teenager has a written plan (including a 'Sick Day' plan) for managing their diabetes. Ensure the teenager has adequate diabetes supplies to take with them. Ensure the teenager's friends know how to treat a 'hypo' and have an emergency plan in place for seeking medical care if needed.