

Surviving 'Schoolies' Week

Information for Young People

The tradition of going away at the end of your final year of school is really popular amongst young people. It is a great way to relax with your friends after an often stressful end to your 12 years of schooling.

The key to having a great time at 'schoolies' as well as keeping the peace with mum and dad, is being well prepared, and staying in control. This means making sure that you understand how to look after your diabetes in all of the different situations that you might find yourself in.

It is a good idea to have a chat with your diabetes educator about the following situations before heading to 'schoolies'. You might think that you know what to do, but it is very different when your parents aren't around to ask them for advice:

- being prepared for a week of "no set plans"
- timing of injections when you are sleeping in late and staying up late
- drinking alcohol
- looking after your diabetes during a 'hang-over'
- looking after your diabetes if you get sick
- sex , drugs and alcohol
- general safety information you need to know to make sure nothing goes wrong so you can have the best week.

By learning how to look after yourself you will be able to take the right action if any problems arise. Being prepared is the best way to ensure that you will have a trouble free week (at least as far as your diabetes goes).

Sleeping Late

Schoolies week is about staying up late partying and sleeping in. You have probably already worked out that if you get up late, and have breakfast late your morning insulin injection is going to be given later. If all of your insulin doses are moved later it is not a problem. The important thing to remember is not to miss any injections and that your short or rapid acting insulin is given at the same time as a meal. It is really important to check your Blood Glucose Level's (BGL's) regularly to make sure that all is OK.

Having No Set Plans

Another great thing about 'schoolies' is hanging out with your friends and not having set plans. You might meet at the beach then meet up with other friends then, go

somewhere else to eat. You will often not go back to your place for hours at a time. So that you can feel comfortable to do what everyone else is doing, it is a good idea to take everything you are likely to need for the day or night with you. That means take your insulin, BGL meter and some food with you. Because it is usually hot in November, it's a good idea to take your insulin in an insulated pack so it won't go off in the heat. The insulated pack is also good for keeping your drinks cool. Don't forget to pack your sunscreen!

Alcohol Consumption

Underage drinking is not recommended for any teenager. Lots of young people go to 'schoolies' week and have a great time without drinking or getting drunk. Remember, it is against the law to drink alcohol if you are under 18 years of age.

If you do drink alcohol and you have diabetes then you need to know the following information:

- alcohol, particularly sweet alcohol drinks can **initially** raise the blood glucose levels and later cause them to fall
- alcohol may inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of a 'hypo'
- alcohol can mask the early symptoms of a hypoglycaemia
- alcohol can lead to confusion which may affect your ability to manage a 'hypo' and may cause you to forget to take your insulin
- your friends and others can mistake the signs of a severe 'hypo' (reduced level of consciousness) with being drunk and leave you to "sleep it off"

Tips on Preventing Problems with your Diabetes

- Before going out, have a meal which includes plenty of carbohydrate (carb's)
- Don't drink too much and avoid 'binge' drinking
- Don't swap alcohol for food
- Drink slowly and take a break occasionally - have a non alcohol drink or water in between alcoholic drinks
- Never leave your drink unattended and don't let others top up your drinks
- If you are going to be doing a lot of activity like dancing you may need to take less insulin before you go out and before going to bed
- Drink low-alcohol beers or wine rather than spirits
- Eat some 'carb's' while you're drinking and before going to bed
- Take a BGL before going to bed
- Always carry some 'hypo' food with you
- Carry some identification in case a 'hypo' is mistaken for you being drunk
- Make sure a friend that is staying with you knows what to do like, call an ambulance if you cannot be woken
- **never** leave your drink unattended in case it gets 'spiked'.

Hangovers

- If you are feeling 'sick' or you are vomiting and can't eat, you still need insulin. Insulin must **never** be stopped. Start your 'sick day' plan.
- If you want to go back to sleep after having your insulin, set an alarm (on your mobile phone) so you will be woken in 2 hours to do another BGL
- If vomiting continues, see a doctor or go to the emergency room at the local hospital.

(adapted from the Clinical practice guidelines: Type 1 diabetes in children and adolescents)²

Note: If you are 'hung over' and can't eat anything then you may need to take less insulin. **Never** stop your insulin. Make sure you take your BGL's so you know what's happening with your diabetes. Start your 'sick day' plan and check for ketones if your BGL is above 15.

Ideally: You should take a written plan for 'hangovers' with you and check it to make sure you are doing the right things to keep your diabetes out of trouble. Talk to your parents or diabetes educator about your 'sick day' plan before you leave, to make sure you know what to do.

Alcohol and Sex

Alcohol impairs your thinking and your judgement and some people are more likely to engage in unsafe sex when they have been drinking. Using condoms not only protects you from any sexually transmitted diseases but will reduce your chances of an unplanned pregnancy. Be aware that getting drunk can increase the risk for girls being 'date' raped.

Drug Taking

Some people will be exposed to illicit drugs in some way during 'schoolies' week. For many it won't be the first time. Some of you may be offered drugs; some may know people who chose to use drugs. It is important to remember that most young people do not use illicit drugs during 'schoolies week'.

Taking drugs even if it is only occasionally, can affect you making decisions about your diabetes as well as increase your risk of developing mental health disorders. Most recreation drugs alter mood, perception and thinking ability which can lead you to forgetting to take your insulin or ignoring 'hypo's'. Some drugs make you feel like you don't want to eat which can lead to hypoglycaemia.

Marijuana is different as it may cause you to get the 'munchies' and really over-eat causing high BGL's. It may also stop you from feeling 'sick' and stop you from vomiting which can disguise the early symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA can make

you really sick and in some cases be life threatening. Remember to check your BGL and if it is over 15 check for ketones.

This is your life and you need to make the right choices for you and not be pressured into anything that does not feel right. It's OK to say NO.

To make sure you have a great 'schoolies' week be prepared and have a plan so you will know what to do to keep yourself safe and well.

References

1. Stillman, J., Lang, E., et.al., (2003) *Paediatric and Adolescent Diabetes Education Manual, For Health Professionals*, Queensland Health, Queensland Government Publication
2. Clinical practice guidelines: Type 1 diabetes in children and adolescents. National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Government, March, 2005; 188-189.
3. 'Reality Check' website: www.realitycheck.org.au
4. Novo Nordisk, *Going Out / Staying Out*, Publication