

Juvenile Diabetes: Raising a Healthy Kid

It can be tough to be a kid. Growing pains can come in all shapes and sizes, from sibling rivalries and playground bullies, to growth spurts and acne. But of all the challenges kids face, none are as unforgiving as a severe medical condition.

Juvenile diabetes is an illness that not only hinders life as a kid, but also may also brutally change the shape of adulthood. Even healthy, active kids who suffer from juvenile diabetes face an opponent that can rob them of their good health as they grow into adults. As parents, we can take necessary steps today to help raise a healthier kid.

Causes and symptoms of juvenile diabetes are easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. These are the facts that every parent must be aware of:

The BasicsFirst and foremost, it's important to realize that your child's diabetes is not your fault, and you need to make sure that your child does not feel that he or she has brought about the disease. Popular to contrary belief, Type I or "juvenile" diabetes is not caused by childhood obesity or sugar overload. This is a genetic disease. Juvenile diabetes creates an autoimmune response to pancreatic antigens, thus causing these same proteins to break down. The pancreas is what delivers the insulin that breaks down glucose and converts the glucose into energy. Approximately 1.4 million people in the United States alone suffer from this form of diabetes.

Effects and Symptoms Juvenile diabetes can cause a long list of medical problems including foot ulcers, digestive problems, possible kidney failure, difficulties with eyesight and even blindness. The symptoms of juvenile diabetes include blurred vision, excessive thirst, frequent urination, weight loss, extreme fatigue or lethargy, and a numbing or tingling sensation in the hands and feet. Should your child begin to experience one or more of these symptoms, make an appointment to see your physician immediately.

TreatmentWhile the cause of juvenile diabetes cannot be prevented, there are treatment methods available to help to control the disease and lessen your child's discomfort. See if there is a diabetes clinic in your area and, if possible, insist on a referral to a doctor specializing in juvenile diabetes. He or she will prescribe insulin and provide a special diet and exercise regime for your child. The doctor will also show you how to regularly monitor your child's glucose levels. It is your responsibility to ensure that the medications are administered properly, and that your child eats the right types of food. You also need to be sure that your child stays healthy and active, as exercise will help to stave off any complications from this illness.

Parents naturally want to prevent our children from harm and suffering; but unfortunately, some things are simply out of our control. Juvenile diabetes is a genetic disease that cannot be prevented. There are, however, precautions that may be taken. If you are concerned that your little one may be suffering from this illness, take him or her to the doctor. If anyone in your family has a history of juvenile diabetes, you must know the signs and symptoms, and take steps to help keep your child healthy. With smart food choices and plenty of exercise, your child can enjoy the healthy, carefree lifestyle that every kid deserves.