WHAT KIDS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DIABETES
Come hang out with me!
CONTENTS:

• Introduction
• How It All Started
• What Is Diabetes, Anyway?
• What Happens When You Have Type 1 Diabetes?
• Testing, Testing 1, 2, 3
• Learning About The Foods I Eat
• Important Food Groups To Know About
• Tips On Eating Out
• Keeping An Eye On Hypoglycemia
• Staying Active!
I have type 1 diabetes.

I live deep in the rainforest. My whole family lives there. The rainforest is an awesome place to hang out with friends.

I have lots of buddies who pop by to hang out with me. They know I have type 1 diabetes and they’re cool with it. I do all the things they do—sometimes way better! I just have to plan ahead and be more careful.
HOW IT ALL STARTED

One day I got home from school early. I wasn’t feeling too good. I told my parents and they took me to see a doctor. After doing a few tests, the doctor said that I had type 1 diabetes. At first, I didn’t know what
diabetes was and that scared me. But then I talked it over with my doctor. I realized that diabetes was going to be a big part of my life. So my family and I began to learn all we could about diabetes.
What is diabetes, anyway?

That’s the first question I asked my doctor.

He explained that diabetes is a condition where my body has trouble balancing how much sugar, or glucose (gloo-cos), is in my bloodstream.
I asked that question too!

When people eat food, it goes to their stomach where it gets broken down into different things. One of those things is called glucose.

Glucose is very important because my body uses it to get energy. It’s just like gas in a car. Without it, my body won’t have power. I’m always on the go—I need energy.

Glucose goes from my stomach into my bloodstream where it gets delivered to the zillions of cells all over my body. The problem is, glucose can’t get into my cells on its own. It needs the help of insulin.

Insulin is made in my body by the pancreas (pan-cree-as). It acts like a key to unlock cells and let glucose in from my bloodstream. So, cells, glucose and insulin are really like best friends. They have to work together to help the body stay energized.

Now that’s what I call teamwork!

**FUN FACT**

Did you know that approximately 100 trillion cells make up the human body? Can you imagine trying to count them all! (That's a lot of hungry cells to feed!)
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU HAVE TYPE 1 DIABETES?

Most people’s pancreas produces the right amount of insulin needed to help sugar get into their cells. But a person with type 1 diabetes has a pancreas that can’t make enough insulin. Like mine!

Luckily, doctors have figured out a way for me to give my body the insulin my pancreas can’t make. With it, I can now help glucose get into my cells when I need it.

This helps my blood sugar levels stay on target!

I have to put the insulin into my body by injection. At first, the needle scared me. But my doctor explained that insulin wouldn’t work if I swallowed it. The needle puts the insulin under the skin so that it can get to where it needs to be—in my blood.

After some practice, the shot got easier and a lot less scary. It only feels like a tiny pinprick now. I feel better about taking insulin, because I know I’m taking care of myself.
Doctors are still trying to figure out what causes diabetes. Until they do, I have a bunch of things I can do to take care of myself. Check it out!
Having type 1 diabetes means that sometimes I have to balance a lot of things every day, like taking my insulin on time, keeping track of what I eat, and checking my blood sugar levels.

Blood sugar is a term used to refer to how much glucose is in my blood.

My doctor explained that I need to try to keep my blood sugar as close to normal as possible. Testing helps me know how well-balanced my insulin, food and activity are. This all helps me keep my blood sugar at, or close to, the level it should be.

Keep it steady!
**Stay balanced!**

**INFO TO KNOW**

**Glucose:** The medical word for a kind of sugar the body uses for energy.

**Pancreas:** One of your body’s organs. It makes insulin.

**Insulin:** A hormone that moves glucose from your bloodstream into your cells.
It doesn’t take **super-powers** to test your blood sugar level.

But, you sure are super!
KEEPING TRACK

Every time I do a blood test, I write it down in my Log Book. I note the time, date, and number I got when I tested. I also write down how I felt, and how much insulin I took. I sometimes include how much I ate or what my activities were.

I can tell you for sure that it’s a great idea to keep good records. Doctors, diabetes educators and other people on your diabetes team will think you’re a superstar for doing it. They use that information to check how your diabetes is doing.
LEARNING ABOUT THE FOODS I EAT

What are your favorite foods? Mine are probably grapes and strawberries—I try to eat healthy and have a balanced diet.

People with type 1 diabetes should try to keep an eye on what, when and how much they eat.
Food can have a really big effect on blood sugar levels. Your doctor will probably make an appointment for you and your family to see a dietitian. This is a person who knows all about food and how it can change your blood sugar. The dietitian will talk to you about the things you like to eat, and help you and your family learn how to match these foods with your insulin and your physical activity. The dietitian may even suggest trying some new foods that are good for you and taste great, too.

Some of the foods you ate before learning that you have type 1 diabetes may not be the best choices. Your doctor or dietitian will give you the information to help you come up with the best meal plan and physical activities.
According to my dietitian, the following food groups can have a big effect on my blood sugar level. It’s good to be aware of these foods to help keep track of my blood sugar level.

**Carbohydrates**

Eating carbohydrates (car-bo-hi-drates) or “carbs” is like putting gas in my car. It gives me energy really quickly. Carbs are the body’s main source of fuel. My stomach turns carbs into glucose fast.

Some foods high in carbs are breads, grains, fruits, milk, desserts and some vegetables. Believe it or not, table sugar is also a carb. Other carbs include honey, molasses, syrup and other sweeteners. Carbs affect blood sugar the most. So, I always make it a point to track the carb amounts in my meals and snacks. My favorite carb is spaghetti noodles. What’s yours?
Proteins
Eating foods with protein like meats, cheese, and fish, helps keep muscle and body tissue fit. Proteins can also be used for fuel, but it takes twice as long to change proteins to glucose.
Fats

Fat is found in butter and margarine, oils, salad dressings, and any foods cooked in butter or oil. Fats are basically concentrated energy. They act like reserve fuel. Fats allow your body to absorb certain vitamins and help the cells send signals to the rest of the body. You don’t need a lot of fat every day. It has double the calories of carbohydrates or proteins. Too much can make you overweight. So don’t eat too much fat.
TIPS ON EATING OUT

It’s a real treat to go out to eat, but I still have to think about what I choose. Counting carbs and following my meal plan is very important for my diabetes. And so is making healthy food choices. Check out my tips, as they might help you eat a little bit better.

Some fast food restaurants have “Nutritional Facts” brochures, or info on their websites that can help you figure out the amount of carb grams in your meal.
Practice at home! When you get to know how to figure out how many carb grams are in your food at home, you and your parents can do a better job of estimating grams of carb when you eat out.

Practice counting carb grams at home before you eat out.
It’s normal for my blood sugar to go up and down during the day. But there are times when it gets too low and I feel very weak, shaky or light-headed. This is hypoglycemia (hi-poh-gli-see-mee-uh).

When this happens, I tell my parents or the adult in charge right away.

When I, or my parents, notice symptoms of hypoglycemia, I treat it right away. But I always try to do a blood sugar test first.

Your doctor or diabetes educator can tell you which blood sugar levels mean you have hypoglycemia. But if you don’t feel well or you don’t have your meter, go ahead and treat for hypoglycemia.
HERE'S HOW TO TREAT FOR HYPOGLYCEMIA:

1. Take 15 grams of carbohydrate, such as 3 glucose tablets, ½ cup of orange or apple juice, or 5-6 pieces of hard candy.

2. Wait 15 minutes, then check your blood sugar.

3. If your blood sugar is still too low, take another dose of 15 grams of carbohydrate and check again after 15 minutes.

4. Once your blood sugar returns to your normal range, you may need to eat a snack with carbohydrates and protein. Crackers with cheese or peanut butter, or 1 cup of milk are good choices.

If your blood sugar stays too low even after treatment, your parents or an adult in charge may need to take you to see a doctor.
Like healthy eating, physical activity is important for everyone, whether or not they have type 1 diabetes. I get mine from climbing trees, jumping over logs and chasing my friends around the rainforest. Playing team sports or any kind of physical activity can also be really fun. But you need to keep a few things in mind. If you sign up for a team, tell your coach you have diabetes. It’s important for your parents to teach the coach to spot and know how to treat hypoglycemia.
Also, before getting into sports like football, soccer, track or hockey, make sure you and your parents talk to the doctor about possibly adjusting your insulin dosage. Always keep something with you to treat hypoglycemia. And don’t forget to check your blood sugar before you start playing. If you follow these few rules, you’ll be in the game!
HAVE FUN!

See! I do everything I love — leap, climb and cartwheel. Knowing the rules for taking care of type 1 diabetes and following them lets me be me. Just remember…

- Eat healthy.
- Take your insulin on time.
- Check your blood sugar regularly.
- Write it all in your Log Book.

I try to plan ahead, count the carbs I eat, use my Log Book, and have fun. You should, too!