

School Camps and Diabetes

Having diabetes doesn't mean you can't go on school camps. Camps are a great opportunity to be with your friends and to have some fun.

To attend a school camp you will need to be able to draw-up or dial-up and deliver an accurate dose of insulin. If you take injections, you will need to be able to inject yourself. If you are on an insulin pump, you will need to be able to re-site an infusion set and deliver a bolus dose of insulin. You will also need to be able to accurately do a blood glucose test and count carbohydrates.

If you can't do these things, then it is not safe for you to go. That is, unless a parent, school nurse or a teacher's aide (who has been trained to give injections or look after an insulin pump) is also going to the camp. So it is much better for you to be able to look after your own diabetes.

Planning is the key to having a great time at camp. Here are some tips that will help you look after your diabetes while you are at camp.

Tips for Camp

- Even if you are able to look after your diabetes by yourself, it is a good idea for someone else to know how to act in a diabetes emergency if for e.g. you have high or low blood glucose levels. Usually this is a teacher or a teacher's aide.
- Some school camps allow you to phone home when needed to discuss blood glucose levels (BGL's) and insulin doses. It is a good idea for you to organise this with the school before you go. If you are allowed to take a mobile phone to stay in touch, make sure the phone will work at the camp site. You will need to check with the school to make sure they are happy for you to use a mobile phone at camp.
- Some camps plan exercise and sport at times that you might not be used to, such as a run or hike before breakfast. So that you can plan for these situations, and know what to do, it is a good idea to have a copy of the activity program and the food menu before you go.
- Your diabetes doctor, educator or dietitian will be able to help you plan for the activities and check to see if there is enough carbohydrate in the meals. So make an appointment a few weeks before camp.
- It is a good idea for your teachers or other carers who are attending camp to have written instructions on how your diabetes should be managed. This will help them care for you.
- The written guidelines must include information on what to do if you get sick or there is an emergency. Include a contact for your diabetes team with the emergency contact numbers you give to the school prior to camp.
- It is important to take extra diabetes supplies (insulin, syringes, pen needles, 'hypo' food, infusion sets, ketone strips etc.) for emergencies.

Exercise and Hypoglycaemia Prevention for Camp

To ensure that you can join in all the activities without having heaps of hypos, the following steps are recommended:

- Your insulin dose should be reduced before you go to camp. You will need less insulin if you are doing a lot of exercise. This will reduce the risk of having a hypo. Your diabetes doctor or educator will be able to help you with this when you go for your appointment
- In the written plan for the teacher or carer, there must be information on how to manage hypos in case you are so 'low' that you can't treat yourself.

General Safety Issues

- While sleeping on the top bunk is fun, it is better if you sleep on a lower bunk as it makes it easier for you to get up to treat a 'hypo' during the night, and for the teacher or carer to get to you safely in an emergency
- It is really important to do a BGL before you go to bed **every** night while you are at camp. You need to know what to do if your BGL is low (less than 4mmol/L). Your diabetes doctor or educator will discuss this with you at your appointment
- You must have emergency supplies of hypo food (e.g. juice or glucose tablets) in case of a hypo during the night
- It is a good idea to keep your blood glucose monitor, a torch and your hypo food under your bed or bunk, so you and your teacher or carer will know where everything is if you have a hypo in the middle of the night
- You need to have a safe way of disposing of any sharps (syringes, needles, pump cannulas), so take a sharps container with you
- Always carry your glucometer and hypo treatment with you at all times
- Check the school has all necessary contact numbers, including the diabetes team.

Diabetes Camps

Did you know there are some great camps run for young people with diabetes? Diabetes camps are one of the best experiences that a young person with diabetes can have. They are also a great place to learn more about diabetes, improve your self-confidence and independence, and simply have a great time. If you want to know more about diabetes camps in New South Wales contact Diabetes NSW on 1300 DIABETES (1300 342 238) Monday to Friday between 08:30 and 17:00.