

MEDIA RELEASE

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New school year poses extra stress for parents of kids with type 1 diabetes

Parents and carers of 11,000 Australian children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes are likely to face more challenges than most as they begin the new school year.

“There are more than 1000 school age children who have been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in the past year, and for these students and their families, as well as those already living with type 1 diabetes, starting a new school or having new teachers can be overwhelming and challenging,” Diabetes Australia CEO Professor Greg Johnson said.

“It is critical that principals and school staff are equipped to support students with type 1 diabetes and that these children don’t experience discrimination or adverse impacts as a result of their condition.

“Diabetes Australia provides a range of information and advice for parents who may be struggling to arrange school support for their children, and we encourage them to contact us.

“It’s important that parents feel they can work together with schools, health care providers and support organisations to ensure their children have a diabetes management plan that works for everyone.

“Late last year we conducted nationwide consultation to better understand how we can work together to make the day-to-day experience of children with type 1 diabetes attending schools more manageable and less stressful.

“We spoke with more than 1000 families, 700 school staff, more than 320 health professionals, as well as peak health and education organisations and state and territory government departments to help identify the issues and develop solutions.”

Some of the key findings of the consultation included:

- confusion and inconsistency from state to state about the roles and responsibilities of parents, schools and treating clinical teams in treating children with type 1 diabetes;
- inconsistency in education and training programs available to support schools with students with type 1 diabetes;
- parents often bear the responsibility of day to day diabetes management support of children with type 1 diabetes at the school meaning they are unable to work or endure ongoing stress;
- individualised diabetes management plans for children with type 1 diabetes are often outdated or inaccurate;
- training gaps for schools with students with type 1 diabetes, particularly in relation to new technologies such as Continuous Glucose Monitors which were recently subsidised by the Australian Government and are now used by thousands of children with type 1 diabetes;
- the absence of an accurate or comprehensive data source on the schools that children with type 1 diabetes attend, or the schools that have received training and education about insulin administration and type 1 diabetes.

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“With the support of the Australian Government and in collaboration with the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, JDRF Australia, Australian Diabetes Society, and the Australasian Paediatric Endocrine Group, we are currently developing a new national Diabetes in Schools Program to be implemented by mid-2019.”

“This will help ease the burden on parents and carers, many of whom currently have to factor in daily visits to their children’s schools to administer insulin. It will also help schools to build their capacity to provide support,” Professor Johnson said.

Professor Johnson said Diabetes Australia would be working with parents and families, principals and schools, and key health and education experts to design the new Diabetes in Schools program to start later in 2019.

“It will include information targeted specifically at key groups including parents and carers, teachers, principals and health professionals that will support communication between these groups,” he said.

“There will also be a new national, three-tiered type 1 diabetes training and education program that will ensure principals and school staff have the skills necessary to support children at school.”

The three tiers will cover:

- Basic diabetes education/information for all school staff
- Detailed training and education about diabetes management for designated school staff who will be directly involved in supporting students with type 1 diabetes
- Practical and more specific training and support for designated school staff that focuses on the individual student and their specific management plan including insulin injections and dosage. Where possible, this training should be provided through the usual clinical treating team. Where this is not possible, this should be provided by qualified health professionals, with direct communication with the clinical treating team.

In the meantime, any parents who are feeling anxious about how their child’s diabetes will be managed while at school should **call the NDSS Helpline on 1300 136 588**.

Diabetes Australia acknowledges the Australian Government’s funding of \$6 million through the National Diabetes Services Scheme to develop and deliver a new national Diabetes in Schools program. This funding ends on 30 June 2020.

Links to a range of resources can be found [here](#).