

Back to school: Do we have a safe and level playground for young people with diabetes?

Tuesday 31 January 2017: The lack of a clear, consistent national approach to supporting young people with diabetes at school and in early childhood settings (schools) means many parents of more than 3,000 Victorian students with diabetes may experience an anxious start to the school year.

If not treated appropriately, diabetes can pose immediate & life-threatening health risks and must be considered with the same seriousness as acute asthma attacks and anaphylaxis.

Diabetes Victoria CEO: Craig Bennett would like a nationally consistent program and a more equitable approach to supporting young people with diabetes, as well as staff, across all levels of education.

“Diabetes Victoria is concerned that many schools do not adequately plan and prepare to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people with diabetes, which means they may miss out on some activities, learning opportunities and also experience stigma, distress and discrimination.”

For example, support is often required with insulin injections that may be needed at lunchtimes, to help keep blood glucose levels close to target.”

“Young people with diabetes have a fundamental right to normal school experiences, including full participation in all educational, extracurricular and sporting activities. It is important that the support needed to ensure that this occurs, is in place.”

“Many parents and families worry about school environments and how their children can have a normal experience, without the stigma and issues often associated with insulin injections, checking blood glucose levels and treating or dealing with variances in blood glucose levels.”

Mr Bennett said: “the current approach varies greatly between states and much can be done to develop greater consistency in policy, practical support systems and therefore confidence levels for parents, young people with diabetes and their teachers.”

“It is time for a systematic approach in which every Principal and School Board accepts the challenge and responsibility to better plan and prepare for students with diabetes who attend their schools,” said Mr Bennett. “More needs to be done to support the growing number of young people being diagnosed with diabetes.”

*We **support, empower and campaign** for all Victorians affected by diabetes.*

For more information:

Jane Kneebone 0416 148 845 jkneebone@diabetesvic.org.au
Sybille Taylor 0408 102 344 staylor@diabetesvic.org.au

Notes to editors:

Parents often report a lack of understanding from teachers and schools regarding appropriate day-to-day diabetes management issues.

Issues can include:

- a lack of easy access by young people to the diabetes care equipment they need throughout the school day;
- a lack of supervision of insulin injections, or insulin pump button pushing;
- a lack of timely access to drinking water or toilet privileges when a young person has high blood glucose levels;
- a lack of appropriate blood glucose management and supervision around sporting events, sometimes leading to hypoglycaemia events;
- a lack of consideration of diabetes around illness, excursions, camps and examinations; and
- teachers are often concerned about their own lack of knowledge which means they may not be able to confidently support young people with diabetes.

[Watch videos](#) of young people with diabetes sharing stories & comments about their experiences of managing diabetes at school.

Diabetes Victoria's school action and management plans can be accessed [here](#).