

The biggest challenge most families have in managing diabetes is dealing with the blood glucose numbers! While we recognize the necessity of monitoring blood sugar levels several times a day, the results you receive not only impact the decisions you make for your child but also your emotional reaction.

Each one of those finger pricks can help put you in control of diabetes. In an instant, that reading gives you the information you need to:

- Identify factors that could be raising or dropping blood sugar levels such as food, exercise, and stress.
- Identify patterns in blood sugar control.
- Make adjustments in insulin dosage to optimize blood sugar control and well-being.

The numbers are a vital piece of information needed by your child's health care team to fully evaluate the A1c result. As important as those numbers are, however, it's the reaction to the numbers that often causes significant consequences within the family.

The blood sugar results are what they are, and getting upset about them, especially outwardly to your child and family does little good. Instead, remind yourself that by having this information you have the ability to try do something about them. The language you, your family or friends, and your health care team use when discussing numbers with your child is extremely important for their mental well-being. Try to use and encourage others to use positive language.

Here are a few ideas:

- *"My child has diabetes"* rather than *"My child is a diabetic."*
- *"The blood sugar is in target"* rather than *"That's a good blood sugar."*
- *"The blood sugar is high or low"* rather than *"That's a bad blood sugar."*
- *"I learned something valuable"* rather than *"I/you made a mistake/did something wrong."*

Above all, effective communication regarding the numbers is the key ingredient.

- **Use "I" versus "You"**

Instead of *"You never check your blood sugar,"* say *"I get concerned for your well-being when you don't know your blood sugar level."*

- **Remove value statements**

Instead of *"Your blood sugar is terrible,"* say *"Your blood sugar is below/above your target."*

- **Use empathy**

Instead of saying *"Just get over it,"* say *"It must be frustrating for you when your blood sugar levels are higher or lower than you want them to be."*

- **Positive reinforcement**

Instead of reacting *"432!!! What did you do??!"* say *"I am really proud of you for identifying and correcting the 432. What do you think was the cause?"*

When you carry the personal load of "the numbers," it can have a significant impact on you, your child, and the whole family. Try to steer clear of emotions like fear, guilt, anger, anxiety and isolation. Allow diabetes to occupy only a small part of thoughts and energy levels. Celebrate success in other parts of life. View obstacles as learning opportunities, and then get right back on track.

Accept that diabetes is difficult to manage. Control will probably never be perfect. Understand that our own bodies don't even regulate blood sugar "perfectly" either. An optimistic attitude can go a long way! Most importantly, continue to live your life fully while helping your child to maintain the best health and happiness with the hope that one day there will be a cure.

SOURCE: Education Team at the Diabetes Research Institute; "Your Child was Just Diagnosed with Diabetes...Now What?" (PEP Squad brochure)

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