

## **Important Things to Know About Students with Diabetes**

### **About Diabetes**

Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects people of all ages, including school-age children. Diabetes is a condition in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that converts sugar, starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play a role.

There are two types of diabetes:

In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas does not produce any insulin; these students will always be on insulin.

In type 2

## Common Myths About Diabetes

Myth 1: People with diabetes cannot eat sweets or chocolates.

Fact: People who have diabetes can have sweets if they are eaten in moderation and are part of a healthy meal plan and exercise. Chocolate, for example, is no more harmful to people with diabetes than it is to people without diabetes.

Myth 2: Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.

Fact: Diabetes is caused by a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors, however, being overweight does increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. If you have a history of diabetes in your family, a healthy meal plan and regular exercise is recommended for decreasing your risk of developing diabetes.

Myth 3: People with diabetes should eat special diabetic foods.

Fact: A healthy meal plan for people with diabetes is the same as that for people without diabetes: low in fat (especially saturated and trans fat), moderate in salt and sugar, whole grain foods, vegetables, and fruit. Diabetic and non-diabetic foods offer no special benefit.

Myth 4: If you have diabetes, you should avoid eating starchy foods like bread, potatoes, and pasta.

Fact: In moderation, starchy foods can be part of a healthy meal plan for people with diabetes.

Myth 5: People with diabetes are more likely to get colds and other illnesses.

Fact: People with diabetes are no more likely to get sick than people without diabetes. However, people with diabetes are advised to get flu shots because infections interfere with blood glucose management.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/diabetes/tdcdata.shtm>  
American Diabetes Association - [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

Health and Safety, [Chapter 168, Care of Students with Diabetes](#)