

Children and Young People with Diabetes

Managing exams

Taking an exam can be very stressful for young people, whether they have diabetes or not. Living with the highs and lows of diabetes during the exam period can make it harder, but there is support available.

There are lots of websites that provide advice, tips and support for managing the inevitable stress that accompanies exam preparation. Working together with your Diabetes Healthcare Team and your school will also help to make exams feel more manageable.

Exam stress and blood glucose

How exam stress can affect blood glucose:

- Stress can release hormones that cause blood glucose levels to rise.
- These hormones can also make it harder for injected insulin to work properly.

How blood glucose levels can affect exams:

- Inconsistent blood glucose levels can affect how your child feels during their exam.
- If glucose levels go too high or too low it can affect their vision, concentration and make them feel tired or lethargic.

Watch this video - Conquering exam stress: lessons from our bodies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RZ86OB9hw4>

Talk to your Diabetes Healthcare Team

Make sure you speak to your Diabetes Healthcare Team about what is needed to support you over the exam period. Some things you may want to discuss are:

- Taking glucose monitors/blood glucose meters and hypo treatments into the exam room.
- Allowing you to choose where you sit.
- Arranging supervised breaks for treating hypos, measuring glucose or going to the toilet.
- Whether you want to be considered for special considerations (for example, where your grades may be adjusted if a diabetes-related issue during an exam might affect performance).
- Whether you may be entitled to extra time in the exam.

There may be other things that you would like to be included. The school may want a letter from your Diabetes Healthcare Team outlining your needs, which we are happy to provide.

During the exam period

It is important to look after yourself both before and during your exam period. You can look after yourself in different ways:

- **Make time for things you enjoy.** Find ways to release stress and celebrate progress. You could listen to music, draw, cook, play with a pet, or go for a walk, either alone or with friends.
- **Talk to others about how you feel.** Connect with other people, especially people who are going through the same thing.
- **Try to find balance.** Take regular breaks and be realistic about what you can do in a day. Keep things in perspective and remember that exams won't last forever.
- **Take care of your physical health.** Make sure you get enough sleep, food, water and exercise. If you take regular medication, keep up with your routine.
- **Focus on yourself.** Try not to compare yourself to others. Think of things you like about yourself and what you're good at – this can help boost your confidence.

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On the day of the exam

You should test your glucose in the hours before the exam. If you are using a glucose monitor, your parents may be able to help monitor this with you if that feels helpful. You may want to have a small snack directly before the exam to prevent having a hypo during the exam.

Remember to take everything you need for your diabetes into the exam with you - **good luck!**

Further information

- **NHS guidance**
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/help-for-teenagers-young-adults-and-students/tips-on-preparing-for-exams/>
- **The Sandbox, exam stress resources**
<https://thesandbox.mindler.co.uk/post/exam-stress>
- **Tips for coping with exam stress**
<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/tips-for-coping-with-exam-stress/>
- **Exam stress and pressure**
<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>
- **Revision tips for exams**
<https://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/study-and-exam-tips/revision-tips-for-exams-1238.html>
- **14 ways to beat exam stress**
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/14-ways-to-beat-exam-stress/>
- **How to cope with exam season**
<https://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/study-and-exam-tips/how-to-cope-with-exam-season-46194.html>

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Paediatric Diabetes Team:

- Telephone 01438 288311
- Email childrensdiabetes.enh-tr@nhs.net

Leaflet information

Reference:

- **JDRF** <https://jdrf.org.uk/knowledge-support/guide-for-parents/education-from-nursery-to-university/taking-exams/>
- **MIND** <https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/tips-for-coping-with-exam-stress/>

You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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