

## DIABETES IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD

There is a fine line between caring and nagging – between showing concern and hovering. How do you achieve the balance?

**The following are some ways for talking with your child about diabetes:**

- **Use words and tones that aren't angry or judgmental:**
  - Certain words or ways of asking questions can send scary or hurtful vibes to your children. Think about the words you use. For example, use "high" instead of "bad" blood glucose.
  - Take care not to blame or nag your child as you help them manage their diabetes.
- **Engage in Active Listening:**
  - It's sometimes hard to do, but it's important to listen closely to your child's comments and questions. Repeat back to them what they said or asked about to be sure you understand, and be sure to make eye contact.
- **React calmly:**
  - Kids remember your responses and often try to avoid a negative reaction in the future. When your child has a high blood glucose reading or forgets to take their insulin, stay calm. Focus on the solution and move on.
- **Be aware of negative facial expressions:**
  - Try not to look disappointed or frightened when you see a blood glucose reading outside of the target range. Your child can read your facial expressions, and may feel that you are disappointed in them or fearful when it is too low or high.
- **Share your feelings:**
  - If your child understands how worried you get, then he might better understand why you ask so many questions.
- **Set realistic expectations:**
  - Mistakes will happen and perfection is impossible in managing diabetes. If you believe this, your child will too, and you won't be so hard on each other.
  - When you set unrealistic goals, your child may hide things from you. For example, expecting perfect blood glucose levels is not realistic. Blood glucose levels aren't always controllable but the goal is to keep them as close to the target range while adjusting for life as it happens.

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- **Ask for honesty – no matter what:**
  - Let your child know that you want to hear the truth. If they feel they did something they shouldn't have, telling you right away is the best option. Be curious about what happened. Work together to solve the problem.
- **Empathize:**
  - Put yourself in your child's shoes. Try to imagine how your child is feeling. These feelings may range from fear, sadness, and anger to denial, burnout and even guilt for causing you so much worry.
- **Keep an open-door policy:**
  - Tell your child that you're open to hearing ideas and complaints – any time, any place. Reassure them that if they have anything on their mind, they should come and talk with you. You want to listen and help when you can.

**Source:** [American Diabetes Association, “Communicating with your Child”](http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/parents-and-kids/family-communication/communicating-with-your-child.html) (accessed July 25, 2018 from: <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/parents-and-kids/family-communication/communicating-with-your-child.html>)