

DIABETES IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

PARENTS: HOW WILL YOU COPE?

When a child is newly diagnosed with diabetes, parents often put their needs on the back burner to attend to their children's needs. Please remember...

1. Children look to their parents for direction on how to feel and act in a new situation. When parents practice healthy coping strategies, children will often do the same.
2. When parents take care of their physical and emotional health, they have more energy for their children. If you are not dealing with your own feelings about diabetes, how will you help your child with theirs?

Some suggestions for newly diagnosed families:

- **Go easy on yourself:**
 - Give yourself the freedom to feel sad, angry, and frustrated. These are normal reactions to a new diagnosis. The emotions will become less intense with time if you deal with them now.
 - Overnight you have been asked to become a diabetes expert. Eventually, it will seem like second nature to you. In the meantime, break things down into small steps; identify necessary immediate goals and focus on them first.
 - You may want to take a short break from other commitments.
- **Identify and use supports:**
 - Your Diabetes Team is there to help! Ask questions before a small worry turns into a big problem.
 - Share the load! If you are a two-parent family, both parents need to practice diabetes management skills so that you can both care for your child. Involve other important caregivers so that you have babysitters available when you need a break.
 - Remain connected with friends and family.
 - Check out organizations such as Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and Diabetes Canada, and talk to other parents.
- **Find time for fun!**
 - In the beginning, it can seem as though diabetes is the only thing that exists in your life. Make time for fun activities and maintain a regular routine. Show your children that diabetes is a part of your life but not the whole picture.

Adopted from: Pediatric Social Work Service, IWK Health Centre