

Quick Guide for School Staff

UNDERSTANDING DIABETES

Most pupils with diabetes manage their condition confidently and independently for much of the school day. However, blood glucose levels can change quickly – particularly around mealtimes, physical activity, illness, exams, or periods of stress.

It is important for all staff to understand the basics of diabetes, recognise when a pupil may need support, and know what to do.

What is diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition where the body's immune system has destroyed the cells that produce insulin. Many school-aged children with diabetes have Type 1.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin it produces doesn't work properly. Although more common in adults, children and young people can also be diagnosed with Type 2.

What is insulin?

Insulin is a hormone that moves glucose from the bloodstream into the body's cells, where it is converted into energy. Without insulin, glucose stays in the blood and cannot be used by the body.

School staff do not need to become diabetes specialists – but understanding the signs that something may be wrong can help prevent a minor issue from becoming a medical emergency.