

A new era in supporting WA children with type 1 diabetes at school set to begin

Perth Children's Hospital will be one of the first hospitals in Australia to deliver critical diabetes training to teachers and school staff as part of a new national Diabetes in Schools program.

The new \$6 million national program is set to ease the strain of type 1 diabetes on families by helping to ensure that principals, teachers and school staff have the support, training and tools they need to support students with type 1 diabetes at school.

Perth Children's Hospital will be providing face-to-face training at certain schools where students have high needs. This will be individualised for the particular student and involve all key aspects of diabetes management including what to do in a diabetes emergency.

"A recent survey found that more than three-quarters of all parents have visited their child's school in the past year because of a low or high blood glucose episode," Diabetes Australia CEO Professor Greg Johnson said.

"There are around 1200 school students with type 1 diabetes in Western Australia so this is an enormous burden. Every one of these students may need insulin injections or other important diabetes management support during school.

"The new Diabetes in Schools program, funded by the Australian Government and part of the National Diabetes Services Scheme, signals a new era in school support for kids with type 1 diabetes and their families.

"It will provide an integrated package of information, training and support for parents and families, schools and staff, and health professionals to better support students with type 1 diabetes.

"We have consulted extensively with school principals, teachers and the education sector who clearly indicated they wanted more support, training and tools to help them support students with type 1 diabetes."

The national survey of parents revealed the serious issues and impacts of type 1 diabetes on the school experience of these children. In Western Australia:

- 77% of children with diabetes had a low or high blood glucose episode at school that required the parent to attend the school
- 60% of children were unable to attend school because of a diabetes-related issue

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- 43% of parents believed diabetes had impacted on their child's ability to fully participate in school activities
- 55% of parents believe school staff would benefit from more education and training to support children with type 1 diabetes.

Professor Johnson said the results painted a clear picture of why the Diabetes in Schools program was needed.

"Principals, teachers and school staff do a great job – but it is clear that more training and support is needed," he said.

"The new Diabetes in Schools program will provide nationally consistent support and training at three levels.

"Level 1 is basic introductory information about type 1 diabetes that all school staff should have. This will be available through a new web portal that provides access to a range of tools, resources, information and support to help school staff to better understand how to support students with type 1 diabetes at school.

"Level 2 support and training is available for school staff who are directly involved in supporting students with type 1 diabetes. This can be access through online modules (for all schools) or group education workshops. Training covers type 1 diabetes and food, monitoring glucose levels, insulin and other key issues.

"Level 3 support offers face-to-face training at the school which is individualised for a particular student and provided, where possible, by a health professional from the student's diabetes treating team (often a hospital).

"It will cover all key aspects of support for that student including glucose monitoring, insulin administration and glucagon administration. This training will be prioritised to schools with students who are newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes or require support to administer insulin.

"Level 3 services will be delivered by some of Australia's leading paediatric diabetes centres and will roll out progressively across Australia commencing from March 2020."

Perth Children's Hospital Endocrinologist Professor Liz Davis said the hospital would be one of the first in Australia to offer Level 3 support and training to schools.

"Type 1 diabetes can have significant short and long-term impacts on a child's capacity to learn and participate in other activities at school but appropriate support and training can help lessen these impacts," Professor Davis said.

"We are very excited to be the first hospital in West Australia to offer this face-to-face, individualised training that really is a game-changer for everyone involved."

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Other paediatric diabetes services will come on board to deliver training and support to schools across Australia in the months ahead.

St Peter's Primary School Pina Hutcheson said the program would be welcomed by principals, teachers and school staff.

"Being an educator is all about helping children fulfil their potential and this program will help principals, teachers and school staff ensure children with type 1 diabetes achieve all the things they want to achieve," Ms Hutcheson said.

"The program has been specifically designed to fit in with teacher's busy schedules and will allow teachers to access the level of knowledge about diabetes that is most appropriate to them and the children they teach."

Diabetes WA General Manager of Health Services, Deborah Schofield said the organisation was pleased to be coordinating the program across the state; working with Perth Children's Hospital, schools and families, and with Diabetes Australia.

"The new National Diabetes in Schools Program builds on some existing schools education and support programs that Diabetes WA has been providing," Ms Schofield said.

Professor Johnson thanked the Health Minister, Hon Greg Hunt MP for supporting and funding the new national program.

"This is a key issue in ensuring the short- and long-term health of children with type 1 diabetes and we'd like to thank the Australian Government and Health Minister Greg Hunt for funding this vital initiative," he said.

The Diabetes in Schools program is built on extensive consultation with principals, teachers, parents and health professionals and provides a range of tools, resources, information, training and support to help schools support students with type 1 diabetes.

The Diabetes in Schools program is supported by Australia's leading diabetes groups including the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, JDRF Australia, the Australasian Paediatric Endocrine Group and the Australian Diabetes Society.

Visit the Diabetes in Schools website for more information:
diabetesinschools.com.au

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