

Diabetes in Children



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is one of the main risk factors for a child developing type 2 diabetes. As very young children are not able to articulate their problems, it is extremely difficult to determine if the child has developed the condition or not. As with most medical conditions effecting children, it is absolutely essential to **refer** customers to a medical professional as soon as you, as a **pharmacy assistant**, suspect that the child may have something as serious as diabetes. As with diabetes in adults, the **complications** associated with the disease need to be **monitored** – much more so in children. The complications that both types

In this article I would like to address type 1 and type 2 **diabetes** in kids: According to recent statistics, both are on the increase.

have in common include heart and **blood vessel disease**, neuropathy which is **damage** to the nerves, kidney damage also known as nephropathy, damage to the blood vessels of the **retina** known as diabetic retinopathy, foot damage caused by damage to the nerves in the foot and **poor circulation**, and skin conditions including bacterial and fungal infections.

Media interest in **obesity** in children, which apparently has reached epidemic proportions, leads us to believe that only type 2 is on the increase. While this may be true, it **overshadows** the fact that the **incidence** of type 1 diabetes has increased **three-fold** in the last thirty years. The fact is that type 1 is the most common form of diabetes in children. Although type 1 is not completely understood, there are certain risk factors for a child developing type 1. Some known risk factors include: **exposure** to viruses that may **trigger** autoimmune **destruction** of the **islet cells** in the pancreas, which are responsible for

the production of insulin, low vitamin D levels, and a slight risk when there is a family history of type 1. Type 1 has a lot of symptoms: increased thirst and the **accompanying** frequent urination, extreme hunger, weight loss despite increased food intake, fatigue, **blurred vision** and **irritability** or unusual behaviour. Although some children who have type 2 diabetes do not show any symptoms of the condition, it may be characterized by slow healing of **sores** and skin injuries or low resistance to infections. Another sign is an area of **darkened** skin – usually in the **armpits** and the neck – which may indicate insulin resistance. In **concurrency** with the media reports of an obesity epidemic, a high BMI

Pharmacy customer: Hello.

PTA: Hello, what can I do for you?

It's my son, Jonas. He started school in September and after just a few weeks he seemed to show no more interest. He was very excited to begin with, you know learning lots of new things, making lots of new friends. But now ...

Has he shown any unusual behaviour? ▶

► **Well, he seems to be tired all the time. When he started school he was up well before the alarm clock rang and couldn't eat his breakfast fast enough before going out the door to catch the school bus!**

Has he had any infections since he started school, you know the flu, mumps anything like that?

Oh yes, he had hardly started in the first class when, about three weeks later, he was sick with the flu. Not the swine flu, thank goodness, but the one that does the rounds in the autumn and winter every year.

He missed two weeks of school! You can't imagine how upset he was over that!

Of course! Has he shown any unusual symptoms since? Increased appetite or drinking more than usual?

Now that you say it, he keeps complaining that he can't get enough to drink! And he's always hungry! I thought he was hungry because he's growing at an enormous rate! And he's so skinny!

I **recommend** that you go to your family doctor as soon as possible.

Why? Is it something serious?

I can't really say, but I believe that your son might have developed diabetes.

Really? Oh, my goodness!

How awful!

I didn't mean to alarm you, but from the symptoms that your son has it is very likely that he has diabetes. In any case, in your position I would **consult** a doctor any way. He or she will run a series of tests to determine if Jonas has diabetes or not.

Is it possible that Jonas might have another children's illness?

Yes, but only a health professional can determine this. There is also a danger of **diabetic ketoacidosis**, which includes symptoms such as abdominal pain, **vomiting** and **nausea**, confusion and loss of appetite. But don't worry from the symptoms that you have described, it's unlikely that Jonas has this. But please, please, please consult your family doctor as soon as possible.

Diabetes! This will probably mean constant injections and blood tests and special nutrition!

Of course it means carefully checking blood glucose levels and treatment with insulin. This doesn't mean that Jonas and the rest of your family can't have normal lives. Treatment of diabetes with insulin is one of the most researched and most effective means of controlling a disease. And just because you and Jonas need to keep an eye on his blood sugar levels, it doesn't mean specialist nutrition! In fact, it means taking a look at your family's eating habits and thinking about what you eat. Well-balanced meals and eating the correct amounts are not just important for diabetics, it will **benefit** the rest of the family too!

That's one positive aspect at least!

Don't worry! Your doctor will probably send you to a specialist who can tell you far more about living with diabetes than I can. And as I said, it's only a possibility that Jonas has diabetes at all. Only a doctor can determine this. So, don't be alarmed, to be certain to go with Jonas to your doctor.

Thank you for your help.

No problem! Goodbye.

Bye! ■



References available from the author
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VOCABULARY

to address	ansprechen
according to	laut, nach
recent	neuesten
obesity	Adipositas
overshadow	überschatten
incidence	Vorkommen
three-fold	dreifach
exposure	Aussetzung
trigger	auslösen
destruction	Zerstörung
islet cells	(hier) Langerhans-Inseln
accompanying	begleitend
blurred vision	Sehstörungen
irritability	Gereiztheit
sores	Wunden
darkened	verdunkelt
armpits	Achseln
concurrence	Übereinstimmung
refer	überweisen
pharmacy assistant, (also known as pharmacy aide)	engl. Bezeichnung für PTA
complications	Folgeerkrankungen
monitor	überwachen
blood vessel disease	Blutgefäßerkrankung
damage	Schaden
retina	Netzhaut, Retina
poor circulation	schlechte Durchblutung
swine flu	Schweinegrippe
recommend	empfehlen
consult	um Rat fragen
diabetic ketoacidosis	diabetische Ketoazidose
vomiting	Erbrechen
nausea	Übelkeit
injections	Spritzen
nutrition	Ernährung
benefit	nutzen