

KNOW YOUR STUDENT

FACT SHEETS TO GUIDE THE
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS



Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes

Definition

Diabetes (diabetes mellitus) is a condition of the endocrine system (located in the abdomen), which affects the body's ability to maintain normal blood glucose (sugar) levels. Blood glucose levels are normally controlled by the hormone insulin, which is made by the pancreas. Diabetes is often managed through injecting insulin, taking tablets, regular exercise and/or maintaining a diet.

There are two main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1:** juvenile diabetes (insulin dependent) – is common in people under 30. Onset is usually in early childhood.
- **Type 2:** (non-insulin dependent) – is often known as a 'life style disease'. Type 2 usually affects people over 40 who are overweight (especially around the abdomen) and who have high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

People with diabetes can have health issues which require first aid to be provided. In some situations, it may be necessary to provide the person a sugary drink. Refer to your First Aid training, First Aid Officers or information from reliable sources, such as St Johns First Aid Fact Sheets, available at http://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/FS_diabetic.pdf

The most common symptoms of diabetes may include the following:

- fatigue;
- hunger;
- sweating;
- trembling;
- paleness;
- confusion;
- blurred vision;
- excessive thirst;
- frequent urination.

Impact on training and assessment

The impact of diabetes on a learner will vary according to how well their condition is managed. Learners with well controlled diabetes may have little or no difficulties in learning situations. However, learners who have poorly controlled diabetes and/or who are insulin dependent may experience some difficulties. These may include:

- irritability;
- blurred vision;
- fatigue/tiredness;
- poor concentration and attention;
- limited attendance as a result of a 'hypo' or 'hyper' state;
- reduced cognitive function and possible slowed responses.

Delivery and assessment strategies

The following strategies are suggestions. Each student who is living with diabetes will have their own individual support and learning needs and it's recommended as a first step, that you ask them and/or their family or support network (if such a network is present and accessible) what the best ways to support their learning is.

When liaising with anyone other than the student directly, ensure you maintain confidentiality, as per TAFE Queensland Privacy Policy.

Presenting and communicating information

- Discuss with the learner what they would like to do if diabetic symptoms occur in the training environment.
- Be understanding when the learner needs to leave the classroom with little or no warning and/or if they arrive late.
- Prepare and arrange for information such as lecture notes to be accessible through electronic form and/or provide printed material.
- Provide opportunity for the diabetic learner to have frequent breaks.
- Encourage learners to allow enough time in their studies to thoroughly revise lessons. Teachers are encouraged to support learners seeking clarification of content.
- Avoid targeting the learner with questions and tasks that involve reading aloud.
- Review learner's progress periodically.
- If under 18, and with the learner's permission, involve parents through regular communication about how the learner's diabetic management and self-care are impacting on their learning.

Support personnel and technology in delivery

- Organise learning support to assist in assignment tasks.
- Provide the learner with a support worker to assist with planning and organising their study/workload.

Utilising technology to maximize student engagement

- A reader/scribe can assist learners with reading and writing material.
- Learning materials and information can be converted into formats that are accessible for the learner e.g. audio files (such as MP3 format), Braille (a tactile reading and writing code, which is read using the fingers) or large print.
- Screen reading software such as Job Access With Speech (JAWS) reads electronic material aloud to the user. It provides audible access to electronic information, software applications and the internet.
- Electronic magnification devices are available in portable, transportable, desktop and laptop based forms. They magnify or scan print based materials and objects.
- Magnification software (e.g. Microsoft Magnifier, ZoomText) enlarges the whole computer screen including text and application buttons / navigation.
- Anti-glare screens and reducing the brightness or changing the contrast of computer screens can benefit.
- Connect (also referred to as Desire2Learn) has numerous options to increase accessibility to information provided within Connect. Options such as screen readers, keyboard-only navigation, colour contrast accessibility features and zooming options are all available within Connect. Educators can access information about these options at <https://connect.tafeqld.edu.au/shared/help/student/content/en/Accessibility.html>.
- Audio recording of training delivery or note taking (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) to assist learners with handwriting difficulties and / or with mishearing and misquoting.
- A Disability Coach or Disability Support Worker can assist the learner with planning and organizing. The benefit to requesting a Disability Coach/Support Worker is that they may be able to look holistically at the support and learning needs of the student and provide some helpful ideas regarding software, or education strategies to help increase the student's understanding, participation and engagement.

All of the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment

- Defer assessments, especially when the learner is experiencing diabetic symptoms.

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- Provide an opportunity for the learner to take frequent breaks during tests.
- Arrange time extensions for tests and assessments.

References

- Health Insight – Diabetes (2009 & 2016), <http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Diabetes>
- Diabetes Australia (2009 & 2016), <http://diabetesaustralia.com.au/>
- Better Health Channel (2009 & 2016). Type 2 diabetes, http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Diabetes_Type (Endorsed by Diabetes Australia)
- St John Ambulance Australia (2016) Diabetes-Induced Emergency, http://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/FS_diabetic.pdf

Further Resources

- Diabetes Manual (2016). Caring for Diabetes in Children and Adolescents, http://www.rch.org.au/diabetesmanual/index.cfm?doc_id=2352
- Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training, <http://www.adcet.edu.au/>