



# How to Survive Halloween with Diabetes

Are you aware that approximately one in every 400 to 600 children and adolescents has type 1 diabetes? Although it is difficult to count the actual number of children with diabetes, 10.26 percent of the population age 18 and older have diabetes, that's 360,912 Alabamians.

## What is Diabetes?

### There are two types of diabetes:

**Type 1 diabetes:** This type is caused by an autoimmune disorder, a problem with the body's immune system. In a healthy body, specialized cells (called beta cells) in the pancreas make insulin. Insulin is a hormone that allows the body to use energy from food. In type 1 diabetes, the immune system mistakes beta cells for invaders and attacks them. When enough beta cells are destroyed, symptoms of diabetes appear.

**Type 2 diabetes:** With this type the beta cells still produce insulin. However, either the cells do not respond properly to the insulin or the insulin produced naturally is not enough to meet the needs of the body. So insulin is usually still present in a person with type 2 diabetes, but it does not work as well as it should.

Some Symptoms of Diabetes: Frequent urination, excessive thirst, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, increased fatigue, irritability, blurry vision. If you have one or more of these diabetes symptoms, see your doctor right away.

## What do I do on Halloween?

Kids with diabetes face a challenge on Halloween: what to do with all the candy they collect. While their friends are busy gorging on their trick-or-treat booty, kids with diabetes are often asked to be more careful.

There are many possible approaches to helping kids with diabetes enjoy Halloween, including:

- \* Put extra effort into your child's costume.
- \* Get the whole family involved. Plan a party on Halloween night. That way, friends and family can get together AND you can plan a healthy menu.
- \* Children with diabetes can have treats; of course, the rule is moderation with foods high in carbohydrates (including sweets and starches). Include treats in the meal plan. Check blood glucose levels as this helps to teach the lesson that candy causes elevation in blood glucose. Kids do want to have glucose numbers in normal ranges! They feel better!

Exchange some of the candy collected while trick-or-treating with another type of treat, such as a small toy or money. Kids might like this, especially since they can get something more long-lasting than candy.

As an adult you may even wish to choose non-candy treats to give away to trick or treaters. Some families give out Halloween-themed pencils, small plastic bugs, glow-in-the-dark rubber balls, or other small toys instead of candy.

Although, there is no cure of diabetes, advances in diabetes treatment are being made all the time. The Diabetes Control and Complications Trial and other studies show that people can and do live healthy and happy lives with diabetes. Good diabetes care can be complicated and adjusting to lifestyle change can be difficult. But the results – a healthy, long life for you or your child -- are worth it.



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SCHOOL NURSE