

**DiABETES UK**  
CARE. CONNECT. CAMPAIGN.

**TYPE 1  
DIABETES:**  
*Make the grade* ★



# TYPE 1 DIABETES AND EXAMS

**WHAT YOU NEED TO  
KNOW FOR SUCCESSFUL  
SCHOOL EXAMS**



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## About this tool

This tool is designed to help students with Type 1 diabetes, their families and schools plan and prepare for successful exams. While some information is provided about Type 1 diabetes and how to treat it, this tool focuses primarily on the exam scenario. At the end of the tool, a printable card is included for the student to give to the invigilator on the day of the exam.

For more information about Type 1 diabetes go to [www.diabetes.org.uk/schools](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/schools)

## Type 1 diabetes and school exams

When a student with Type 1 diabetes takes an exam, there are things to consider and preparations to be made to make sure that they achieve their full potential and get the grade they deserve. This is because both high and low



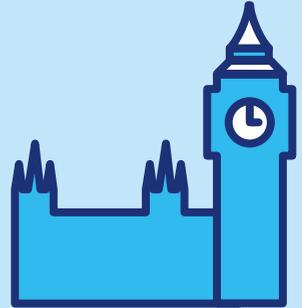
blood glucose (also called blood sugar) levels can affect their exam performance.

Low blood sugar levels (also called hypos) can affect a student's mental agility, their ability to plan, make decisions, maintain attention and can affect the speed of their reactions.

High blood sugar levels (also called hypers) can cause difficulty concentrating, thirst and the need to pass urine frequently. A student with any of these symptoms might not perform as well as they should in an exam through no fault of their own.

## What the law says

Under equality laws, Type 1 diabetes can be classified as a disability. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments<sup>1</sup> to prevent any student with a disability from being placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students. Under these laws, exam boards are required to make reasonable adjustments where a student, who is disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.



**While a student with Type 1 diabetes or their family might not consider themselves disabled, students with diabetes are covered by these laws.**

<sup>1</sup> Reasonable adjustments are just changes to the way things are normally done.

# SECTION 1: HELP FOR STUDENTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

Depending on the type of exam the student is sitting, some arrangements are the responsibility of the school, and some are that of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The JCQ is the organisation which represents the largest national awarding bodies offering qualifications in the UK, including GCSEs, A levels, Scottish Highers and vocational qualifications. So for these type of exams, arrangements must be made in good time as the school may need to get agreement from the JCQ.

For more information about the JCQ: [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)

There are two main types of help which might be available for students with Type 1 diabetes: **Access arrangements** and **special considerations**.

## I. Access arrangements

Adjustments to exam arrangements are known as access arrangements.

Examples of common access arrangements for students with Type 1 diabetes include:

- Being allowed to take drinks and snacks into the exam to prevent or treat a hypo/hyper
- Being allowed to take their blood sugar monitor and insulin treatment into an exam
- Supervised rest breaks – time out to treat a hypo/hyper or to go to the toilet. The clock is paused while the student treats their hypo/hyper/goes to the toilet and restarted once they have recovered. There is no maximum time set for supervised breaks, but if a student has another exam later the same day, this should be taken into account.



# SECTION 1: HELP FOR STUDENTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

## Access arrangements:

### Parent/student's responsibilities (check list)

**Tell your child's school about any access arrangements your student will need as early as possible.** This is to make sure that there's enough time to arrange the adjustments. So if you're expecting exams during the school year, talk to the school at the start of the school year.

**Don't assume the school will automatically know what adjustments your student needs.** Think about how diabetes might affect your child's performance in an exam, and discuss particular adjustments you think they need with the examinations officer or the member of staff responsible for arranging exams at your child's school or college. Things to consider are: testing blood sugar levels during the exam, eating or drinking to prevent or treat a hypo, being allowed time to treat hypo or go to the toilet.

**Make the point that these are the arrangements that are already in place for the student during lessons.**

**Once agreed, make sure the access arrangements are added to your student's Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP).** The plan should be signed off by you (and your child if appropriate), the school and your Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurse (PDSN).



# SECTION 1: HELP FOR STUDENTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

## Access arrangements: School's responsibilities (check list)

**Discuss with the student and family the particular access arrangements needed.** This may include; testing blood sugar levels, eating or drinking to prevent or treat a hypo, being allowed time to treat hypo or go to the toilet.

**Don't assume that all students with Type 1 diabetes will need the same access arrangements.**

**Apply for access arrangement approval from the JCQ.** If approval is required from the JCQ, apply for them in good time, at least **six weeks** before the student's first exam but well in advance of that wherever possible.

**In the application, make the point that these are the same arrangements that the student has in place during lessons.**

**During the exam, make sure that there will be enough exam room staff (invigilators)** to allow the student to leave the exam room and take a supervised break if necessary (eg to use the toilet if blood sugars are high).

**Make sure the school has written evidence confirming the need for supervised breaks.** This may be required by the JCQ.



## II. Special considerations

This is where a student's marks can be upgraded after an exam.

### Who is eligible?

Students are eligible for special consideration if they are fully prepared and have covered the whole course, but their performance in the examination is affected by circumstances beyond their control, for example illness. The amount of the upgrade depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness. The maximum allowance given is 5%, although the JCQ states that 3% is more likely to be awarded for issues related to diabetes.

The most likely reason for applying for special consideration for a student with Type 1 diabetes is a low or high blood sugar level that has affected how well they performed in the exam. The problem doesn't have to be during the exam, it could be something that's happened earlier that is still affecting them, for example, a hypo that has left them less able to concentrate.

Under special considerations, the exam board may consider:

- the amount of work the student managed to do in the exam
- any relevant coursework in the subject
- any previous exams the student has done in the subject.

Getting special consideration can be challenging, and evidence must be provided, for example, a written record or download of blood sugar levels.

# SECTION 1: HELP FOR STUDENTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

## Special Consideration: Parent/student's responsibilities (check list)

**Talk to the invigilator before the exam.** If you are claiming that a hypo/hyper before the exam affected your child's performance, you or your student must tell the invigilator that this has happened.

**Your child's must inform the invigilator if they are unwell during the exam.** If you are claiming that it's because your child had a hypo/hyper or felt unwell in the exam, they must inform the invigilator at the time.

**Ask your child's doctor or nurse to support your claim.**

**Provide the relevant blood sugar readings to support your case.**

**Your child will also have to have done a certain amount of the total assessment needed in the subject.**

**The school will need to apply for special consideration on your child's behalf.** Talk to the examinations officer at your child's school as soon as possible. The school will need to make an application within seven days of the exam affected.



## Special Consideration: School's responsibilities (check list)

Discuss with the student and family the reasons for claiming special consideration

Record any hypos/hypers that might affect the student's performance in the appropriate place

Get the relevant blood sugar readings and medical support letter from the student/parent

Discuss with the staff who were present during the exam in question

Make the application to the JCQ within seven days of the exam



# SECTION 2: PREPARING FOR EXAMS

## I. Preparing for exams - Student and family

### 1. Managing blood sugar levels

Exams are generally a stressful time, and stress often makes blood sugar levels rise. Also studying for long hours can mean more snacking and less activity which can also make blood sugars rise. On the other hand, worrying about exams can put you off eating, so levels can drop, causing hypos. Don't be tempted to run your blood sugars high to avoid a hypo, as this can affect your concentration and can mean you need to pass urine more often. Both of these will affect how well you do in the exam.

It can be hard, but it's important to keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible during exam time, because then you'll be in the best position to concentrate properly and do the best you can in your exams. Regular blood tests are vital as you can adjust your insulin, or the food you're eating, depending on your results.

Talk to your doctor or nurse for individual advice about managing your diabetes during exams.

### 2. Planning ahead

Arrange a meeting with the relevant school staff to discuss the arrangements you're going to need to make sure you are not put at a substantial disadvantage during the exam. You might want to involve your Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurse (PDSN) as well. Have the meeting in plenty of time – if you know exams are approaching, arrange a meeting at the beginning of the school year. Things to discuss with school staff are:

- What you will need to take into the exam room with you. Things to consider are – blood testing equipment, insulin, hypo remedies, water etc.

## SECTION 2: PREPARING FOR EXAMS

- If you use a pump or Continuous Glucose Monitor (GCM), let school staff know, including how to manage any alarms such as putting the pump on vibrate mode during the exam.
- Where you would prefer to sit. Some students like to be at the front of the exam room so they are in easy view of the invigilator in case of a problem, some prefer to be at the back so they can test, treat a hypo or leave the room without disturbing others or drawing attention to themselves. Some prefer to take the exam outside of the main exam room as they don't want to draw attention to themselves if testing or treating a hypo/hyper.
- That you might need supervised rest breaks, to prevent or treat a hypo/hyper or to go to the toilet. During a supervised break, the clock must be paused and restarted when you have recovered. Talk to school staff about how this will work in practice. The record card at the end of the tool can help manage supervised breaks.



This is not an exclusive list. There are a range of considerations as everyone with Type 1 diabetes has individual needs. Make sure that the arrangements you need during exams are written down in your Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP).

# SECTION 2:

## PREPARING FOR EXAMS

### 3. On the day

To give yourself the best chance of success, on the exam day itself:

Try to eat as normally as possible to give your brain plenty of energy to work on.

- Check your blood sugar level just before the exam, and if you need to, have an extra healthy snack or adjust your insulin dose.
- Keep a note of any blood tests you take. Most blood testing kits will record the date and time you did a test so make sure that your meter has the date and time set correctly.

If you need to make a case for special consideration after your exam, you will need an accurate record of your blood tests, including the date and time (see the end of this tool for a template record card)

- Keep your kit, drinks and snacks in clear plastic bags not in black cases or coloured drinks bottles.
- Take some food into the exam with you in case you have a hypo. A sugary drink might be best as you can have that quickly and quietly.
- Tell the invigilator that you have diabetes and that you might need to test your blood, treat a hypo/hyper or use the toilet. Even though you will have told the school already, you still need to let the exam room staff know at the start of each exam. The record card at the end of this tool can help with providing this information to the invigilator.
- If something's happened with your diabetes that might affect your concentration, like a hypo in the night, you must tell the invigilator.
- If you have a hypo in the exam, you must tell the invigilator.



# SECTION 2: PREPARING FOR EXAMS

## II. Preparing for exams: School staff

### 1. Planning ahead

Arrange a meeting with the student and family to discuss the arrangements that will need to be in place to make sure they are not put at a substantial disadvantage during the exam. You might want to include the student's PDSN. Have the meeting in plenty of time – preferably at the beginning of the school year. The type of adjustments likely to be needed are:

- Allowing the student to bring their blood sugar testing kit into the exam, and to test whenever necessary during the exam.
- Allowing the student to bring hypo remedies into the exam (this might include a sugary drink, glucose table/sweets or a snack.) The parent or PDSN will advise on the most suitable hypo remedy for the student.
- Allowing the student to bring water into the exam (high blood sugar levels can cause excessive thirst).
- Allowing the student to bring in their insulin injector pen and to give themselves extra insulin if their blood sugar levels are too high.
- Allowing a supervised rest break to prevent or treat a hypo/hyper or to go to the toilet (high blood glucose levels can make a student need to pass urine frequently). During a supervised rest break, the clock must be paused and restarted when the student has recovered. The template record card at the end of this tool can help manage supervised breaks.
- Make sure there will be enough invigilators in the exam room to accompany a student on a supervised break if necessary



## SECTION 2: PREPARING FOR EXAMS

- Allowing the student to sit in the place that is most appropriate for them, for example, sitting close to the exam room staff if they would like someone to keep a closer eye on them or sitting at the back of the room so they can test, treat a hypo or leave the room without disturbing others or drawing attention to themselves. Or, allowing the student to sit the exam outside of the main exam room as they don't want to draw attention to themselves if testing or treating a hypo/hyper
- Making arrangements to ensure that the invigilators on the day know that there is a student with Type 1 diabetes sitting the exam and what adjustments to usual procedures have been agreed.
- Making arrangements to ensure that the invigilators understand about Type 1 diabetes and how it can affect a student in an exam.

This is not an exclusive list, and individual students will have different needs. The student's specific needs should be detailed in their IHP.

Some access arrangements will need approval from the JCQ and you can check this on their website [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk). Supervised rest breaks do not need approval from the JCQ, but the SENCO (or equivalent) must provide written evidence confirming the need for supervised breaks to the JCQ if requested.

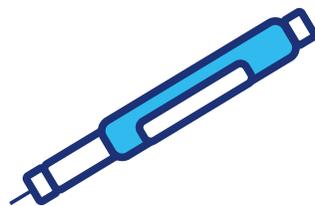
# SECTION 2:

## PREPARING FOR EXAMS

### 2. On the day

On the exam day itself, the invigilators must make sure that the arrangements agreed and detailed in the student's IHP are in place. This might include:

- Allowing the student to bring their blood glucose monitor, hypo remedies, insulin injector pen, water or anything else they need to manage their diabetes.
- Allowing the student rest, or supervised breaks, if necessary to prevent or treat a hypo/hyper or to go to the toilet.
- Making sure that the clock is paused for the student taking a rest or supervised break, and not restarted until they have recovered.
- The student should let you know if they have a hypo/hyper during the exam. Make sure that this is recorded in the appropriate place as it will be needed if the student applies for special consideration after the exam.
- Making sure that there are enough invigilators to accommodate supervised rest breaks, and to accommodate extra time if breaks have been taken
- Allowing the student to sit in the most appropriate place for their individual needs.
- Invigilators or exam staff being aware of the signs of a hypo, and alerting the student if they don't seem to realise that their blood sugar has dropped too low.



## **SECTION 2:**

# **PREPARING FOR EXAMS**

- If a student has had a hypo/hyper before the exam that might affect their performance, they should let you know. Make sure this is recorded in the appropriate place, as it will be needed if the student applies for special consideration after the exam. The template record card at the end of this tool can help manage supervised breaks.

Most students taking exams will understandably be anxious, and students with Type 1 diabetes will have the added concern of whether their blood sugar levels will affect their performance. They may appreciate a quiet word before the exam to make sure they're OK with the arrangements, or at least to reassure them that you know about their diabetes. This needs to be handled sensitively, as many students don't want to stand out or be seen to be treated differently.

# SECTION 3: STUDENT RECORD CARD

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

Exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Exam Time: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

I have diabetes so I may experience a hypo or hyper during the exam.  
My hypo and hyper signs are:

Hypo signs	Hyper signs

I might need to test my blood sugar levels and/or take insulin and/or have a snack and/or drink and I am authorised to:

1. Have the following equipment and medication with me during the exam:


**CLICK HERE TO PRINT THIS SECTION**

# SECTION 3: STUDENT RECORD CARD

2. Have the following hypo remedies to manage my diabetes during the exam:


3. Have supervised rest breaks with the clock paused - to treat a hypo/hyper or to go to the toilet with clock paused until I have recovered

Breaks	exam paused at	Exam resumed at	total break time	Blood glucose meter reading
Break 1				
Break 2				
Break 3				
Break 4				

**Signed by:**

Student:	Parent/Carer:	Invigilator:
Date:	Date:	Date:

**[CLICK HERE TO PRINT THIS SECTION](#)**

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