

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Paediatric Diabetes- Christmas with Diabetes



This diet information is for the family or carers of a child with diabetes to enable them to cope with different meals over the festive period. If you would like individual advice on your child's diet please speak to your Paediatric Dietitian.

If you are unsure about altering insulin at Christmas time please discuss this with your diabetes nurse or paediatric doctor at a suitable time prior to the Christmas holiday

Having diabetes does not mean that you can not enjoy Christmas. However, many Christmas foods are high in sugar so some care must be taken. Also meal patterns change dramatically on Christmas day. With a little planning your diabetic child's diet should fit in with your day to enable the whole family to have a wonderful Christmas.

In the run up to Christmas:

It is fine to have ONE chocolate advent calendar, if the chocolate is eaten as part of your child's breakfast or evening meal. There is only 3 to 5g of Carbohydrate in these sweets so you will not need to count them. However picture / sticker or gift calendars are just as nice and far healthier, and are particularly useful if you are struggling with your child's weight.



On Christmas Day:

- Do not forget snacks if these are usually eaten. If the house is full of family and friends ask a few other people to remind your child. Leave some 10g snacks e.g. fruit, yoghurts or a glass of milk available, where your child can reach them, if you are busy in the kitchen. (As it is Christmas day, some plain biscuits, crackers, crisps, sausage rolls could also be used)
- Ask relatives not to buy Selection Boxes for your diabetic child or their siblings. You, as a parent, may consider buying one small selection box which can be used over the next few weeks. These can be given as an occasional pudding providing:
 - Blood sugars are 4-7mmol/l before the meal
 - The meal eaten contains a good quantity of vegetables/ salad and /or slowly absorbed starchy carbohydrate.
- Instead of having lots of sweets around the house have different fruits- e.g. satsumas, grapes, small bananas, salted/ savoury popcorn or nuts (no whole nuts for children under 5yrs, due to risk of choking)
- Make brandy sauces/ custard with sweetener- it's better for everyone!
- Christmas dinner should fit in with the normal diet. Most children do not eat large portions of Christmas pudding or mince pies so a little of these is fine to be included providing you count the carbohydrate. If your child does not like these try a fancy ice-cream instead.
- If your child does enjoy a large Christmas meal, it is reasonable to allow your child this treat. You may consider more frequent blood sugar monitoring, and the use of extra fast acting insulin (Novorapid or Humalog) if necessary either with the meal or at the next meal if the blood sugars are running high. See table over page.
- If staying up late remember to give your child an extra snack to keep blood sugars in the normal range while being active. Still have supper before going to bed as usual.

Avoiding Hypoglycaemia

The most common problem seen in young children is hypoglycaemia ('hypo') because of waking early, excitement, running around and not eating enough. A few suggestions to make things run smoothly are:

- If your child wakes very early on Christmas day make sure that Santa leaves some sweets (perhaps one or two small packets of sweets or mini chocolate bars) in the stocking to ensure that your child does not go hypo before you wake.
- Make sure that your child eats breakfast
- Remember **changing meal patterns** on Christmas Day

For children on Basal Bolus insulin or an insulin pump

A delay in having a meal should not cause any problems as your child can eat meals at any time providing insulin is given. However, if your child is running around/ playing more than usual they may still need an extra 10-20g snack while they are waiting for the Christmas meal.

For children on twice daily or three times daily mixed insulin

If Christmas Dinner is to be very late (1-3 hours later than usual) change the way your child's meals are distributed

Normal Day = Breakfast - snack - Lunch - snack - Evening Meal - Supper snack

Christmas Day = Breakfast - snack - snack - Lunch - Evening Meal - Supper snack

This will ensure that your child can wait until later to have their Christmas lunch without fear of hypos. If you are worried, test their blood sugars at your child's normal lunchtime to ensure that they are high enough to last until the mealtime.

If your child's blood sugars are running high on Christmas day

Use your usual correction doses of Novorapid, at the next meal. If you do not know these, a good guideline to follow is:

Additional Fast Acting Insulin (Novorapid)

Age	Blood Glucose	Blood Glucose	Blood Glucose
	12-15mmol/l	15-18mmol/l	More than 18mmol/l
<7 years	1 Unit	2 Units	3 Units
8-11 years	2 Units	3 Units	4 Units
>12 years	3 Units	4 Units	5 Units

If blood glucose is more than 14mmol/L you will need to check for blood ketones.

- If you use additional fast acting insulin please monitor blood sugar 2 hours after the meal. Write down the results for future use.

Patient Information

- **Do not treat high blood sugars at bedtime** with fasting acting insulin. If you over treat you could cause hypos. Wait until the next morning when you can check blood sugars 2 hours later. Often high blood sugars on Christmas night are just due to having a sugary treat and may well return to normal by morning time.

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