Pediatric Diabetes Program – Psychosocial Care

Hotel Dieu Hospital offers care for children with diabetes, and their families, using a multidisciplinary team approach. The healthcare team is composed of a Pediatric Endocrinologist, a Pediatrician, a Registered Nurse, a Social Worker, a Registered Dietitian, and a Child Life Specialist. You and your child are key members on that team. Like the other members of the team, you each have an important role to play.

The goal of the team is the best possible management of the child’s diabetes. This will improve their overall health as well as lower the risk of long-term complications.

One of the difficult challenges facing a child or youth living with diabetes is achieving balance. By that we mean many things, including psychosocial balance. The word psychosocial simply refers to psychological, social, emotional and practical concerns.

The Social Worker strives to help you and your child find and maintain a balance between the extremes of diabetes. Diabetes should not be the overwhelming concern in your family, but it should not be ignored or minimized either.

Learning effective ways to manage diabetes early on can help you find balance. The Social Worker and the Child Life Specialist can help you identify the concerns or worries that are unique to you and your child or youth. Together, as a Team, you can begin to find ways to deal positively with those issues. As with any problem, the sooner you figure out what it is and give it a name, the sooner you can look for solutions.

The role of the person with diabetes (depending on age and ability):

- To learn as much as they are able to about diabetes.
- To take on increasing responsibility for the care and management of their diabetes.
- To follow a plan of care, including blood sugar monitoring, insulin injection, diet and exercise.
- To be open and honest with you and with the other Team members about the challenges they face, in order to get the most appropriate help or support.

Your role as parent or caregiver:

- To learn as much as you can about diabetes, and to ask as many questions as you need to.
- To learn about and practice the basic skills required for blood sugar monitoring, insulin and Glucagon injection, “Sick Day” management, healthy eating with meal planning and preparation, and exercise.

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Our hospital is a scent-safe environment.
Please refrain from wearing scented products.
To dig deep into your reservoir of good parenting skills and use patience, open communication, perseverance, co-operation and love.

To work co-operatively with all the other Team members.

**The Social Worker’s role:**
- To be ever mindful of the fact that this is your child or youth who is living with diabetes and that the experience is unique to him or her.
- To help identify the snags or challenges along the way that may be getting you or your child or youth off track.
- To help you figure out useful solutions. These may include advice about applying for special funding; getting drug coverage if you don’t already have it; community resources that may be helpful; supportive counseling for you and/or your child with a goal to keeping the communication lines open and the diabetes on track.

**The Child Life Specialist’s role:**
- To promote understanding of living with diabetes through play.
- To familiarize you and your child or youth with the outpatient clinic environment and visit routines.
- To offer “My Bead Story of Courage” bead program (a visual journey of living with diabetes).
- To help reduce patient anxiety surrounding healthcare experiences or illness-related fears.
- To provide activities to build self esteem and promote engagement in one’s own care.
- To offer procedural support by teaching strategies to better deal with anxiety, discomfort and pain.

**Getting On With It**
- Every member of this team has a critical role to play. Your child or youth may be the star player, who sometimes slips and needs the support of the whole team to get back on track. However, all of the team members have a special contribution to make. The more open we are and the more we cooperate with one another, the more likely we are to see that balance is achieved.
- Diabetes care is complicated work and demands lots of attention. Finding the right place to put it in your family’s life so that it gets enough, but not too much attention is the goal we are striving for. It is achievable!

Reviewed by: Staff of the Diabetes Education & Management Centre, Hotel Dieu Hospital

Prepared by Education & Organizational Development
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