What in the world is glucose? What does the pancreas do, and where is it located exactly? And what’s the big deal about insulin, anyway? Diabetes raises lots of questions and can seem complicated, from its terminology to its tools for maintenance. The following discussion questions and activities can help students understand what diabetes is and how kids with diabetes take care of themselves.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Kids:

Diabetes Center
KidsHealth.org/kid/health_problems/gland/diabetes_center.html

Type 1 Diabetes: What Is It?
KidsHealth.org/kid/health_problems/gland/type1.html

Type 2 Diabetes: What Is It?
KidsHealth.org/kid/health_problems/gland/type2.html

Articles for Teens:

Diabetes Center
KidsHealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/growth/diabetes_center.html

Type 1 Diabetes: What Is It?
KidsHealth.org/teen/diabetes_basics/what/type1.html

Type 2 Diabetes: What Is It?
KidsHealth.org/teen/diabetes_basics/what/type2.html

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. What do you know about diabetes? What does it mean when someone has diabetes?

2. Do you know someone who has diabetes? Share a little about his or her experience. Do you think having diabetes might make daily life at school more difficult? Why or why not? What could you do to support a friend with diabetes?

3. How do kids with diabetes keep themselves healthy? Why is it important for kids to take control of their diabetes? Who can help kids manage their diabetes?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

Camp Diabetes

Objective:
Students will:
- Learn about the nutritional and fitness needs of people with diabetes

Materials:
- Computer with Internet access
- Camp Diabetes handout (available at: KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/conditions/diabetes_handout1.pdf) or plain paper

Class Time:
90 minutes

Activity:
Can you smell that campfire burning? Hear the crickets chirping? Well, pack up your tent because you’ve just been hired by a leading diabetes foundation to design a weeklong summer camp for 5- to 8-year-olds with diabetes. Before you dive into a full proposal, the foundation wants your initial thoughts about two key aspects of the camp – the meal plan and the activity plan. Check out articles on KidsHealth to gather information about the nutrition and fitness needs of kids with diabetes. Now you’re ready to map out your ideas for the camp. Using the Camp Diabetes handout, describe the following elements:

- The types of food that will be served, and a rationale for why these foods have been selected
- A sample meal
- The types of activities planned, and a rationale for why exercise is important for campers
- A sample activity

Extensions:
1. The diabetes foundation has approved your plan but wants to know if you are going to have any differences in the camp experience for kids with type 1 versus type 2 diabetes. Role-play the conversation you would have with the president of the foundation, using information from KidsHealth to support your position.

2. The counselors working at your camp will need training for working with kids with diabetes. Create a one-page training flyer for your counselors that provides basic information about one of the following topics:

- The warning signs of high or low blood sugar
- How to track blood sugar levels
- The whys and hows of taking insulin
Pancreas on Strike

Objectives:
Students will:
- Understand the role of the pancreas
- Explore the effect on the body of the pancreas not producing insulin

Materials:
- Computer with Internet access
- Pancreas on Strike handout (available at: KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/conditions/diabetes_handout2.pdf) or plain paper

Class Time:
60 minutes

Activity:
You just enjoyed a delicious dinner and topped it off with an ice cream delight. But what’s this? Your pancreas has decided to go on strike! Your pancreas, which stopped working because it feels unappreciated, has submitted a formal complaint to the Human Body Labor Board. To plead your case, you need to draft a letter to the labor board, including a storyboard that provides a visual depiction of the importance of getting your pancreas back to work. Before you start writing, do some research on KidsHealth to find out more about the role of the pancreas in your body. Then write your letter to the Human Body Labor Board, including the following information:

- A description of what’s happening to your body in terms of insulin, glucose, and energy level now that the pancreas is no longer doing its job
- A statement of appreciation for the job that the pancreas performs for you

To get your point across to the Human Body Labor Board about your newfound appreciation of the pancreas, use the Pancreas on Strike handout to illustrate the important work the pancreas does.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: Camp Diabetes
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/conditions/diabetes_handout1.pdf

Handout: Pancreas on Strike
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/conditions/diabetes_handout2.pdf

KidsHealth.org is devoted to providing the latest children's health information. The site, which is widely recommended by educators, libraries, and school associations, has received the "Teachers' Choice Award for the Family" and the prestigious Pirelli Award for "Best Educational Media for Students." KidsHealth comes from the nonprofit Nemours Foundation. Check out www.KidsHealth.org to see the latest additions!
Camp Diabetes

Instructions: Can you smell that campfire burning? Hear the crickets chirping? Well, pack up your tent because you’ve just been hired by a leading diabetes foundation to design a weeklong summer camp for kids with diabetes from ages 5 to 8. Before you dive into a full proposal, the foundation wants your initial thoughts about two key aspects of the camp - the meal plan and the activity plan. Check out articles at KidsHealth to gather information about the nutrition and fitness needs of kids with diabetes. Now you’re ready to map out your ideas for the camp. Using the Camp Diabetes handout, describe the following elements:

The types of food that will be served, and a rationale for why these foods have been selected:

A sample meal:

The types of activities planned, and a rationale for why exercise is important for campers:

A sample activity:
Pancreas on Strike
Instructions: To get your point across to the Human Body Labor Board about your newfound appreciation of the pancreas, use the Pancreas on Strike handout to illustrate the important work the pancreas does.