



Surviving the Holidays- Parenting Guide for T1D Kiddos

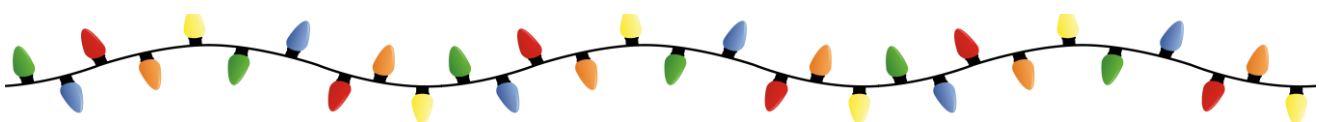
With the holiday season upon us, it leaves many parents to wonder and worry how they can possibly fit in all the demands of a child's diabetes management without losing any of the holiday spirit.

Between changing schedules, family gatherings, mountains of sweet treats, and special activities and outings, all the festivities and fun can throw a wrench into a diabetes management plan! We hope you enjoy the holiday time with as much cheer and as little stress as possible. Our recipe for happy holidays (with a child with Type 1 diabetes) includes a bit of planning, a dash of flexibility and a sprinkle of consistent routines! Together, these tips can make the holidays more enjoyable for the entire family by preventing challenges with your child's T1D.

Maintain Routines

Part of the fun (and frustration!) of the holiday season includes parties (that end past bedtime), yummy (but carb-heavy) treats and special activities (with unpredictable physical activity levels or travel challenges) – while this can be the most wonderful time of the year, all of these unique events can easily throw off your schedule for managing diabetes. Even though it can be tricky, try to maintain your child's routines as much as possible. Having a predictable structure and knowing what to expect helps children regulate their behavior and can help make diabetes management go more smoothly. It can be difficult to keep this type of structure during the holidays, so think about which routines work best for your child and do your best to stick to them.

- **The first priority should be diabetes-care tasks.** If your child's diabetes isn't cooperating, it will be much harder to enjoy the rest of the fun, so focus on blood glucose monitoring and management first.
- **Keep bedtimes and mealtimes as close to normal as possible.** For example, if a meal is going to be later than usual, arranging for your child to eat separately can help you stick to your usual insulin dosing and glucose monitoring schedule. If you'll be away from home for a meal or at a late-night event, sometimes it helps to talk to your host up front to make arrangements.
- **Continue your usual bedtime rituals.** After a long day full of exciting activities, this quiet time at the end of the day can be a good chance to make sure diabetes management has been taken care of, and include calming activities before bedtime (e.g. reading, relaxing music, snuggling) can reduce the impact of holiday excitement on your child's sleep and behavior. Even if sticking to bedtime routines means missing out on part of a late-night holiday tradition, keeping your child's sleep routine intact and getting nighttime diabetes management done will help your child have the energy to participate fully in all the festivities the next day!



Plan Ahead

The one thing we can all predict about diabetes in a child is that it is unpredictable, and no one wants to spend the holidays dealing with an unexpected diabetes crisis. So, this is an especially important time of year to use your organization skills to be prepared for whatever the holidays and diabetes throw your way!

- Bring a snack or eat at home before heading out for holiday events where you don't know the timing of meals or what foods will be offered. Bring preferred foods with you to ensure your child gets enough carbs but be flexible to swap out one of your foods for something on the table if your child wants to participate in the holiday meal.
- Think ahead about how you might fit special foods into your management plan for the day. If your child is willing to try new foods, ask the host for information on what is in the recipes being served so that you can calculate insulin doses as accurately as possible. And you can always ask your diabetes care team for tips about how to dose for any special holiday treats.
- Let your child know what to expect ahead of time to prevent disappointment or upset. For example, if your child loves sweets, try: "There will be cookies at the party, and we will only have one. You can pick the very best cookie and it will be so good!"
- Communication is key. Prepare your family and friends ahead of time so that they avoid making unwanted comments such as, "I don't think he can eat that!" or "Poor baby, with all those painful needles and pokes! That must hurt!" Let them know how *they* can be helpful – maybe by singing a fun holiday song as a distraction while you do an injection or enjoying a low-carb snack with your child.
- If you're traveling for the holidays, bring 2-3x more supplies than you expect to use.

Have Fun

Most importantly, remember to have fun and enjoy this time together as a family. By handling the challenges of diabetes directly and getting back to having fun, you can teach your child that it is possible to take good care of diabetes without missing out on the cheer! Don't forget to pay attention to everything your child is doing *well* during all the activities, and feel free to pile on the praise: "I'm so proud of you for taking a break from playing with your cousins to let me do your insulin!"

This time of year is also an ideal opportunity to show your child that the holidays are about giving and caring for others, so bring the family and come volunteer at our food pantry or go help at the community garden and find a way to give back to the community. Mark your calendars for upcoming *Connect, Share and Chat* meetings and take advantage of the wisdom of other parents of children with T1D to explore ideas of what has worked well for them to fit diabetes management into a busy, fun-filled, holiday season. Finally, don't forget to take a few moments to relax and enjoy the season – refreshing yourself will make sure you're at your best for your child – you'll need it!

STJDA wishes you Happy Holidays!

