



## with diabetes

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International

February 2011

### Something Borrowed, Something Blue, and Something for Checking Blood Glucose:

#### Wedding Planning with Type 1 Diabetes



It's Valentine season – a time when love, romantic getaways, and even engagements abound. For engaged couples hoping to make their special day even more special, wedding planning can feel like an all-consuming process. And when you throw type 1 diabetes into the mix, there's even more to consider.

For a glimpse into wedding planning when type 1 diabetes is involved, we caught up with JDRF's own Lianna Wingfield, a bride-to-be with type 1 who is busy planning her wedding with her fiancé, Billy.

**Q:** So, typically the first thing on the wedding planning to-do list is finding the right venue. Are you concerned about your venue not being educated about brides with type 1 diabetes?

**A:** *We're planning for our wedding to be a little nontraditional, with an outdoor setting at an estate or farm, so we're kind of making up our own venue. So I haven't encountered that, but I'd imagine many people with type 1 would have this issue with venues and their staff, since the general public often lacks knowledge about type 1.*

*It really helps that the people who will be at my wedding are the biggest support system I have. I think everyone will be supportive and fully informed about what I need. Even all my friends that I've met here in New York are learning about me and my type 1, especially since I work at JDRF.*

*Some of my JDRF colleagues tease me that I should get married at the JDRF Ride to Cure Diabetes in Vermont, since we're planning to have our wedding in the New England area. Hey, at least then my venue's staff would fully understand type 1!*

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### Type 1 and the 'Holiday Five': A Weighty Issue

People who have type 1 diabetes are no strangers to the word "diet." If you live with the disease, you probably already count carbs and plan every meal, if not every bite. So trying to control your diet even more closely to shed the extra five pounds that just about everyone seems to gain annually around the holidays can be frustrating.

With or without type 1 diabetes, it's easy to gain a few extra holiday pounds by indulging with friends and family. Many people also go through a holiday crunch period at work, and by the time they're finally on vacation, they want to enjoy some well-deserved treats. Having type 1 diabetes can make losing weight more challenging, because you have to first make sure that you're staying healthy and managing your blood sugar levels.

Weight loss is a common New Year's resolution, but shedding the pounds isn't easy. So how do people do it? The National Weight Control Registry keeps track of those who have successfully maintained weight loss, and according to their findings, those successful individuals kept up more exercise, paid greater

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#### Ask a Parent

##### Avoiding Evening Lows

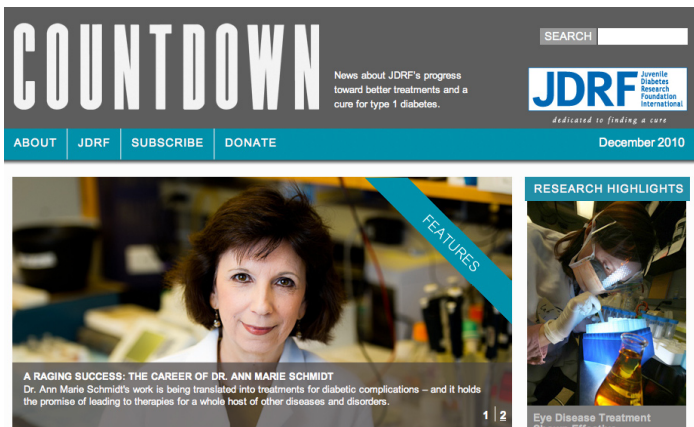
**Q:** My son Matthew is in college, and his blood glucose has the tendency to drop every evening. When I say drop I mean crater. He is suspending his basal dose on his insulin pump after dinner, but still, some evenings he'll go down; he'll have no insulin in his system but will continue to drop. Is there any way to avoid this?

**A:** My 17-year-old daughter, Hannah, has had type 1 diabetes since she was five years old. I'll try my best to tackle your question, but please bear in mind that I'm a parent just like you. I have no medical or legal expertise.

My first recommendation would be to have Matthew work with his endocrinologist to figure out why he is going so low in the

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## A Successful Launch of Online *Countdown*



*Countdown* magazine has officially gone digital! The first issue of the new [online Countdown](#) launched in early December with great success, and has already received more than 16,500 views. The issue offered two cutting-edge feature articles: the first highlighting the work of Ann Marie Schmidt, M.D., who may have found a trigger for a number of diabetes complications; the second covering a group of researchers who are working to create a faster-acting insulin that works more like the insulin produced naturally in the body.

This exciting [first issue](#) also included several research highlights; greetings from Jeffrey Brewer, JDRF's President and CEO; and the same JDRF Around the World section from the earlier print editions, only with enhanced visual appeal provided by the new online format.

In making the change from print to online, we have also incorporated our *Research Frontline* e-newsletter into the [online Countdown](#). The new format has allowed us to streamline the way we communicate research progress and to provide easy access to information about the latest and most promising JDRF-funded research, all in one place. Visit <http://countdown.jdrf.org/> anytime to see the issue.

All of our e-newsletter recipients are automatically subscribed to the [online version of Countdown](#). However, those who prefer not to receive it can opt out at any time.

We hope you will enjoy this new [online Countdown](#) and pass it along to friends and family members who share your interest in research for better treatments and a cure for type 1 diabetes.

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### Avoiding Evening Lows

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evening. The doctor or perhaps his or her diabetes nurse educator can review Matthew's numbers from his meter to get a good idea of when this is happening each evening and what could be causing the tremendous drop. This is a big concern – one that should compel Matthew to get in touch with his endocrinologist, even if it's by e-mail.

Here are some thoughts Matthew can consider before contacting his doctor:

Thinking about what's happening earlier in the day may help in figuring out the pattern behind the drop. Does he exercise every day at a certain time? Exercise can cause a drop in blood sugar several hours later.

Another clue would be to look at what Matthew is eating, or not eating, the three or four hours leading up to the drop. It's quite possible that he needs to reduce his lunch and/or dinner bolus dose considerably, and cut back on his basal rate several hours before the evening drop.

Matthew should keep in mind that the insulin he gets for meals or from his basal dose will affect his blood sugar anywhere from one to four hours after he receives his insulin. If he's suspending his basal dose after he goes low, then he's already behind the curve in trying to prevent that low. Once his blood sugar is low, suspending the basal dose will not have an impact for at least a full hour, maybe longer. Basal changes must be made at least an hour before Matthew's blood sugar begins to drop.

I'm sure Matthew already has plenty to read in college, but I highly recommend that you guys get a copy of the book *Pumping Insulin: Everything You Need for Success on a Smart Insulin Pump*. This book does a great job of explaining how and why you should make insulin adjustments well in advance to prevent lows.

Another thing for Matthew to discuss with his doctor is his diet. It's possible that he's eating a bunch of simple carbs that go in and out of his body too quickly. More complex carbs, like those found in bagels or pasta, can help to keep blood sugar from bottoming

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## Ask a Parent

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out. Combining carbs with some fat and protein, such as peanut butter, could also help to avoid the evening lows. The complex carbs work together with fats and proteins to sustain a more even blood sugar level without the spikes and drops.

Matthew should also discuss with his doctor the various stressors that are in his life now that he's in college. When our daughter gets nervous about a big test, her blood sugar will sometimes spike and then drop dramatically once she's done with the test. It could be that Matthew's adrenaline is causing his blood sugar to rise during the day when he's under pressure in classes, only to bottom out in the evening when he's feeling more relaxed.

It's a good idea to get in touch with your local JDRF office, as the staff or volunteers there may be able to suggest some resources – support groups, retreats, workshops – that could be helpful for you and your son. JDRF may also know of other families in your area with a kid close to Matthew's age. It's always nice to meet families who understand what you're going through. And I find I always get the best advice from other parents.

I cannot emphasize enough that Matthew should contact his doctor for advice on how to avoid these evening lows. My guess is that the key will be working backwards a few hours from the low to see what's happening earlier in the evening or afternoon that could be causing the evening lows. Sometimes managing diabetes is like doing detective work.

All the best to you and your family!

## Ask a Peer

### Concerns About Eye Disease

**Q:** I'm starting to sense a problem with my vision and I also feel pressure behind my eyes. Should I be concerned that this could be a complication of my diabetes?

**A:** You're absolutely right to be looking into this. I'm not a medical professional, though, so please don't take anything I say here as medical advice. The information I'm providing is just based on my own personal understanding of diabetes and the resources available to me.

I can tell you that the most common diabetes-related eye problem is retinopathy, a condition in which changes or ruptures in blood vessels in the eye damage the retina. These changes often go unnoticed until the person who has the condition begins to experience distortion of vision or blindness. Often times, it's only then that people even think to go to the doctor. Since retinopathy can "sneak up" on people in that way, many people are shocked to learn that they have diabetic retinopathy. So here's what to look for in terms of retinopathy symptoms: floaters; spotty, blurry, or hazy vision; or difficulty reading or seeing close up. Without a doubt, your best defense against serious loss of vision is to get regular retinal exams, which can detect early-stage retinopathy before it becomes serious. If you have retinopathy that's detected early, you can opt for laser treatment, which can seal leaky blood vessels, thereby offsetting severe vision issues. But you should discuss potential drawbacks of this treatment with your doctor. It's so important that you visit your doctor to keep track of your eye health, especially since retinopathy is considered to be the leading cause of blindness among working-age adults.

As for the feeling of pressure you describe, that could really come from any number of conditions. In fact, some people can even experience pressure when they have high blood sugar levels. For example, I find that when my blood sugar is high, I feel pressure in my eyes and my vision gets blurry, which can be uncomfortable. So taking that into account, I wouldn't use pressure as an indicator of retinopathy, high blood sugar levels, or any other condition. Your doctor is really the only one who can tell you what your symptoms are indicating.

Of course, there are many other eye issues that are not specific to diabetes but should be looked for during an eye exam, too. I know it can be overwhelming to be faced with so many potential issues, but just keep in mind that if paying attention early to these symptoms results in stopping vision damage before it starts, then it's all worth it.

I strongly recommend that you have your eyes checked soon, and continue with regular exams. As someone with diabetes, you're at much greater risk for eye issues, so you should be extra careful.

Hopefully it's nothing serious – and remember, you're already on the right track by reaching out to others about your concerns.

## Wedding Planning with Type 1 Diabetes

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**Q:** Hilarious! And let's not forget one of the most important wedding details: the gown! Will you have to include any special designs in the gown's structure (like a hidden pocket) to allow for a pump or glucose monitor?

**A:** *I haven't started wedding dress shopping, but I've definitely thought about that. I do use a pump and a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) and I'm always looking for waistbands or pockets to hide them in, so that will certainly be a consideration. Obviously I'll need my pump and my CGM on my wedding day – they just make it so much easier for me to understand what's going on with my type 1...you know, things like whether it's my emotions that are making me feel a certain way or whether it's my blood sugar, or just the stress of the day. They also allow me to see where my blood sugar is trending instead of just what it is at the moment I test. That's why I love my CGM so much. I will really have to explore getting hidden compartments sewn in for my pump and CGM.*

**Q:** Some brides with type 1 have their bridesmaids carry candy or some other form of sugar or glucose in bouquets or other hidden places – do you think you'll have your bridesmaids do anything special to help?

**A:** *Actually, I am not going to have bridesmaids since we are only going to have about 50 or 60 guests. But Billy's daughter, Emma, will be in the wedding, and I may plan for her to have glucose tablets with her if they're not going to be in one of my hidden pockets.*

**Q:** No matter how many guests you're having, one thing's for sure: they'll come hungry! Do you think your type 1 will influence your menu plan?

**A:** *I mean, it always does. Because I've had type 1 for so long, it's always been a factor in my meal planning and it's made me a lot more health conscious. But that's what is great about planning your own wedding and being able to plan ahead – you have an idea of what'll be served, so you can make adjustments. Billy loves barbecue food, which can be very high in sugar and carbs, so I'll definitely have to plan for some lower-carb options...ones that I already know how my blood sugar will react to. I'll have to do some taste testing, too...after all, taste testing is the best part!*

**Q:** Now, a question you probably get a lot: How did you and Billy meet? And how far into your dating did your type 1 come up? Was dating more difficult because of your type 1?

**A:** *Billy and I met through mutual friends - he was living in New York and I was living in Seattle. We had talked a few times over the phone before I met him in person more than three years ago here in New York. I think my type 1 came up in one of those early conversations, because I'm not one to hide it. I'm sure he would've noticed, anyway, on our first date when I'd have to pull out my insulin pump! I'm not shy about explaining my type 1 because I really believe in educating and spreading public awareness about it, since not many people know what type 1 is.*

*When dating Billy, it also really helped that he totally "got it" right away – he's my biggest support.*

**Q:** Wonderful. And are you two planning to have a honeymoon?

**A:** *We haven't made any plans yet for a honeymoon, but knowing us, I'm sure we'll end up going somewhere involving a lot of travel.*

**Q:** Traveling with type 1 diabetes can mean more than just the annoyance of jet lag. How do you approach traveling? What will traveling mean in terms of your type 1?

**A:** *Luckily traveling is something I've done a lot of, especially with Billy and I dating bi-coastally for two years. The most important thing is to plan ahead. I have never been a light packer anyway, but as a person with type 1, I also have to pack extra needles, pumps, glucose tablets, testing strips, and so on – in double the amount that I think I'll need.*

*I always believe that if you have type 1 in a foreign place, you should try to eat foods that you're familiar with, so you can maintain control. And if you're experimenting with new foods, just be aware of how your body is responding. Again, this is where I think the CGM is so helpful.*

**Q:** Thanks so much for sharing about your wedding planning with type 1 diabetes. There are many type 1 brides-to-be out there, and it can be cathartic to both share and hear about some of the challenges that exist. Do you have any parting words of wisdom or advice to others who are planning their weddings while having to factor in type 1?

**A:** *I really feel for other brides-to-be with type 1, because just the wedding planning or just the type 1 alone can be such stressful parts of our lives. So we have to be in control of it all and stay positive – it's only one day of your life! And remember: In the end, if you're marrying the right person, your big day will be amazing, no matter what!*

## Type 1 and the ‘Holiday Five’: A Weighty Issue

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attention to weight and diet, and had a stronger ability to identify the stress factors or emotional eating cues causing their unhealthy choices (known as stimulus control), both before and during the holidays. But how do you start achieving that level of control? What are the steps involved? Below are a few tips:

- Try cooking your own meals whenever possible – it’s not only cost-effective, it’s often healthier, too. In a recent *New York Times* article, Mark Bittman addresses this topic and suggests building a repertoire of three basic recipes: a stir-fry, a chopped salad, and some combination of rice and lentils. If you have type 1, it’s a good idea to cook your own meals, anyway, so you can control your carbs.
- Manage “big eating” scenarios such as football party buffets. Take a small plate of food when you want to eat something and then walk away. That way, you’re more likely to come back only if you’re still truly hungry.
- Hydrate! Keep water or diet soda with you to help feel full.
- Eat in phases at parties. First fill your plate with fruits, veggies, and lean meats. Then go for the crackers and starches. Last, choose your one, favorite dessert, and slowly savor every delicious bite.
- Balance things out. If you overeat some less healthy things at one meal, don’t worry about it. Just get back on track at your next meal with leaner fare, such as fruits, veggies, and whole grains.
- Exercise to boost your mood! Take the edge off stress with a brisk walk around the neighborhood.
- Remember that most alcoholic drinks – like beers, mixed drinks, or margaritas – can have a lot of sugar, which will raise your blood sugar and expand your waistline. Balance things out by drinking water (add flavor packs for some kick if you don’t like plain water) or a diet soda.
- Refocus your social life. Try not to make all your gatherings about food. Take a look at your local newspaper’s calendar to see what kind of fun, festive local events are happening.
- Bring your workout clothes when you travel on vacation. Most hotels have gyms or a pool that you can use in the mornings before your day begins.

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Keep in mind that if you have type 1 diabetes and wrestle with maintaining a healthy weight, it may help to stop focusing on the number you see on the scale, and start thinking more about adopting healthy behaviors. Consider working with a dietitian or personal trainer who understands type 1 diabetes, and develop a plan that will help you stay healthy. Then try to focus on meeting those goals – not your body size or the number on the scale – as the measure of your success.

Taking steps toward a healthy weight and lifestyle with type 1 is important, but it can be hard if others don’t understand the disease. Sometimes, others’ questions and comments about the disease reflect this lack of knowledge. You can find tips on how to respond to and educate others about type 1 diabetes on Juvenation at [http://juvenation.org/groups/educating\\_others](http://juvenation.org/groups/educating_others). The key: don’t allow comments from others to keep you from your health goals.

Many people, even those who don’t live with type 1 diabetes, find they need extra help ensuring that their eating habits, weight, and activity level all have a healthy focus. As a person with so many lifestyle choices to consider, you may want or need support in managing your health concerns. If this is the case for you, talk to your doctor or another member of your diabetes health care team and ask him or her to recommend resources for extra support.

### Did You Know...

The extra insulin and supplies you never get around to using could provide vital help for people around the world who have diabetes but not the good fortune of ready access to insulin. [Insulin for Life USA](#) is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes in-date, unopened, and unneeded insulin, test strips, and other diabetes supplies that would otherwise go to waste. [Insulin for Life](#) then sends those supplies (according to agreed protocols) to recognized organizations, which in turn get the supplies to people in need. Visit <http://insulinforlifeusa.org/> to see how you can help.



If you have a question for JDRF’s Online Diabetes Support Team, go to [www.jdrf.org/diabetessupport](http://www.jdrf.org/diabetessupport)