

DIABETES & EXAMS

Information for Young People with Diabetes Mellitus

Anxiety and Preparing

Diabetes adds an entire new level of anxiety to exams. To perform at your best cognitively, you will need to have close to normal blood glucose levels. When the BGL is too high you may be thirsty, tired, have difficulty concentrating and may need to go to the toilet a lot. When the BGL is too low, you will have trouble concentrating and may become confused. Stress can also affect your blood glucose levels however this is very individual i.e. some people go very high and others experience low levels. It really is worth making the extra effort to try and get your BGL's under control before exam time starts. Some students with diabetes trial different approaches to management around the "mock exam" period, to try and work out what will be the best approach to control blood glucose levels around the actual exams. Your Diabetes team will be able to support you with this so do talk to them about exams and exam planning well before your final exams are scheduled.

Meter Accuracy

It is essential that before you enter into any exams that you **ensure that your blood glucose testing equipment (blood glucose meter and/or continuous glucose sensing device) has been set to the correct time and date.** In the event of you experiencing an episode of hypoglycaemia or extreme hyperglycaemia that affects your ability to perform within an exam, the process for applying for a derived grade requires that a medical professional can verify that the episode occurred. This can only be done if your meter or blood glucose monitoring equipment has accurately captured your blood glucose level at the time of the exam. It is recommended that low (< 4) or high (>15) blood glucose levels captured via continuous glucose sensing devices are re-checked/confirmed via meter blood glucose test.

Diabetes Food

It is imperative that **you take responsibility for ensuring you have brought with you to your exams a supply of "quiet hypo food"** (sugar containing foods such as glucose tablets or juice drinks and long acting carbohydrate snacks such as fruit, bread or milk), **your blood glucose testing equipment and insulin administration equipment** during exams. School personnel supervising the exam need to know in advance that you have diabetes and that you may need to wash your hands and carry out a blood test, eat, administer a dose of insulin or go to the toilet during the exam.

Rest Breaks

NZQA prefer schools to advance apply for formal "Rest Breaks" for all young people with diabetes during exams. A "Rest Break" is defined as when a student can put up their hand to indicate to the supervisor they are starting the break, do their blood testing, eat and drink if they want to, and then indicate to the supervisor that they are ready to start writing again. The supervisor notes the time taken, and adds it to the end of the exam session so that the student doesn't lose writing time for the medical necessity (usually this is no longer than 30 minutes in total).

Students with diabetes do not generally get separate accommodation for the exam, but are usually seated in the corner or the back of the room so the supervisor knows where they are and the student does not disturb others in the event of a medical event.

Most schools have good systems in place for students with diabetes, but as NZQA/Cambridge Exam Supervisors are not generally on the school staff, NZQA prefer that schools have it as a formal entitlement so that it is on the Exam Centre Manager's schedule to warn the supervisors that a student with diabetes is present.

Special Assessment Condition (SAC) Application Process

Prior to entry into senior school years where external examinations are to be undertaken (NCEA, NZQA scholarship exams or Cambridge examinations), students with diabetes mellitus should organise a meeting with the special needs coordinator (SENCO), school nurse, dean and/or anybody else within the school who may be able to support with putting into place support frameworks and understanding expectations around the exams and diabetes.

Students with diabetes mellitus are eligible to apply to NZQA for “**Special Assessment Conditions**” (SAC) on medical grounds. Students must complete a “*Student application for entitlement to special assessment conditions*”. This form can be downloaded from the NZQA website or sometimes sourced via the school.

For most first time applications to NZQA schools apply for SAC online through a secure portal from mid-October through to mid-February. However, first time applications for a new diagnosis of diabetes can occur at any time.

Students need to provide the school with a Medical Report/Certificate which provides evidence of the functional impact of diabetes and details clearly how access to assessment may be impaired by the diabetes inclusive of specific recommendations for suitable examination conditions. Healthcare professionals (specialist diabetes doctors, nurse practitioners, diabetes clinical nurse specialists or General Practitioners) can provide this report to young people.

After each year of entitlement, the school initiates a needs analysis before the next school year starts. As a result of the needs analysis and in agreement with the student, in February the school may:

- confirm that the entitled SAC worked well and is to be continued, or
- update the application with a request for changed SACs.

Confirmed applications immediately roll over the SAC entitlement for the new school year.

For more information on the Special Assessment Conditions process please go to <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/>

Derived Grade Procedure

In the event of a serious diabetes-related problem occurring resulting in a student being unable to complete an exam, the “Derived Grade Procedure” under the “illness and misadventure” clause can be considered. Derived grade is to be given to students who have been clearly disadvantaged due to diabetes related events (for example hypoglycaemia or significant hyperglycaemia during the exam).

Your diabetes team will be unable to complete the relevant documentation related to the “Derived Grade Procedure” unless students can provide evidence that performance in the exam was clearly affected by blood glucose levels captured within a blood glucose meter that was set to the correct time and date, corresponding with the exam.

It is recommended that blood glucose levels <4 or >15 captured on continuous blood glucose devices are confirmed via blood glucose testing with a finger-prick blood test

It is recommended that in the event of a serious diabetes-related event occurring that young people seek medical review within a 24 hour period so that the event can be formally verified and documented.

Websites to help with Exam Stress and Anxiety

- <https://www.youthline.co.nz/services/training-and-seminars/beat-exam-stress/>
- [Www.Lowdown.co.nz](http://www.Lowdown.co.nz)
- [Www.studytime.co.nz](http://www.studytime.co.nz)

Apps to help with Exam Stress and Anxiety

- Mindshift <https://www.anxietybc.com/resources/mindshift-app>
- ReachOut Breathe: au.reachout.com/reachout-breathe-app
- Recharge: au.reachout.com/recharge-sleep-app
- Smiling Mind: smilingmind.com.au
- Check In (beyondblue): beyondblue.org.au/about-us/programs/youth-program-youthbeyondblue/the-check-in-app