

What to Expect at Diabetes Camp in 2019

Diabetes camp season is quickly approaching. Plans are being formulated in all 50 states and around the world to welcome children with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. This is a chance to get outdoors, hang out with other campers and counselors who also have diabetes, get sweaty and dirty, and to become part of a group of people who know what it's like to live with diabetes every day - people who "get it."

According to the Diabetes Education and Camping Association (DECA) over 22,000 children with type 1 diabetes and a smaller number of children with type 2 diabetes will attend diabetes camp this summer. Campers and medical staff are being recruited, camp facilities are being cleaned, supplies are being brought in and paperwork is being completed. Opening day of diabetes camp is special for so many reasons, to so many people, including the parents of first-time campers and parents of children who make it back to camp every year.

Cell Phones at Camp?

This year, as every year, there will be changes in what happens at camp. This summer will mark the first time that many diabetes camps welcome campers and their electronic medical device receivers to camp. The ever-changing technology of continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps brings new requirements and new opportunities for improved glucose management. Included in the devices that allow for glucose review via sensor are cell phones. Since the overall goal of camp is to provide quality care to campers in a safe environment, cell phones will be allowed in many camps. The practice of bringing electronic devices, including cell phones, to camp, was almost universally discouraged or not allowed in previous years.

One of the cornerstones of the camping community was that time spent outdoors in nature, away from communications with friends and family, was time that provided welcome and important opportunities for freedom, introspection, openness to developing new friendships and time to devote to "just having fun."

Anyone who has spent time with young people recognizes that electronic devices are an integral part of their lives and that they are not actually "unwired" from technology very often. Many diabetes camps will be experiencing this new access to cell phone technology this summer for the first time.

Several questions have been raised in advance of this change: What will we do with cell phones when it's time to go swimming? What if one camper confuses his/her cell phone with another camper's phone? Will campers be allowed to call home?" Will the camp be liable for a cell phone that is lost or damaged?

While the answers to many of these questions are somewhat nuanced, diabetes camps are staffed with healthcare providers who are problem solvers, many of whom are diabetes educators. These healthcare providers, in tandem with diabetes camp administrators, will make certain that the changes in cell phone policy introduced in 2019 will be handled in a way that optimizes camper safety and well-being.

AADE and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) provide invaluable technology resources to people with diabetes, their families and healthcare providers. The AADE provides a technology product profile in its DANA website (www.danatech.org).

The ADA, which operates over 60 diabetes camping programs, convened a panel of experts to develop a concise "Best Practices for the use of Diabetes Technology at Summer Camps." That document can be found at www.diabetes.org/summercamp. In addition, they have created a new cell phone policy to clarify their position for camps that they serve, which includes using the device as a medical receiver only, using airplane mode and restricting other uses.

Technology at Camp

The following is a brief list of what products to expect at camp in 2019

Insulin Pumps:

Medtronic MiniMed 530G/Revel, 630G and 670G

Tandem t-slim X2 and Tandem basal IQ

Animas Ping and Vibe (no longer sold, but still in use)

Insulet Omnipod UST400 System and Omnipod DASH System

“Do-It-Yourself” pumps

Continuous Glucose Monitors:

Dexcom G4 Platinum, G5 and G6 10-day

Eversense CGM 90-day implantable sensor

FreeStyle Libre Flash 14-day

Medtronic Guardian Connect

Visit the AADE DANA website DANAtech.org and the ADA summer camp site Diabetes.org/SummerCamp for up-to-date information about how these products are used and the release of additional new products as the 2019 diabetes camping season kicks off.

As always, members of AADE play a critical role in making camp possible for so many children with diabetes. Diabetes education takes place at camp in ways that are unique to the camp/outdoor setting that are not possible in the normal office setting. Diabetes education at camp can only occur if the professional diabetes educators are present in the moment to answer the child’s questions or to coach the child in the proper way to perform diabetes management tasks while experiencing many new activities.

Diabetes camp is also an amazing opportunity for diabetes educators to fully immerse themselves in the lives of their clients and to see hundreds of children using the latest technology, while serving on a healthcare team alongside other experienced diabetes caregivers.

To find a diabetes camp near you and to learn when the camp will be in session, check with the DECA site (www.diabetescamps.org) or the ADA site (www.diabetes.org/summercamp). If you haven’t already, get out there and join the team at diabetes camp!