

Early diagnosis of diabetes in children and adolescents is vital; support World Diabetes Day (14 November 2008)

Diabetic Hypoglycaemia supports the message of World Diabetes Day in raising the global awareness of diabetes (<http://www.worlddiabetesday.org/>). The theme of World Diabetes Day in 2008 is 'Diabetes in children and adolescents', and the campaign aims to raise awareness of the warning signs of diabetes, to encourage and promote initiatives to reduce diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), and to promote healthy lifestyles as a way of preventing type 2 diabetes in children.

To mark World Diabetes Day on November 14, more than 700 monuments worldwide will light in blue to 'Bring Diabetes to Light' as part of the World Diabetes Day Monument Challenge. These include; the Pyramids, the Sphinx, the London Eye, the United Nations Headquarters, Christ the Redeemer in Brazil, Niagara Falls, the Tower of London, Kuwait Towers, the Sears Tower, and the Burj al Arab.

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood. The incidence of type 1 diabetes is increasing by 3% per year in children and adolescents, and type 2 diabetes is also rapidly increasing in this age group, largely due to obesity resulting from poor diet and sedentary lifestyle. Diabetes awareness in children and adolescents and their carers is therefore extremely important.

Undiagnosed or inadequately controlled diabetes can lead to hyperglycaemia, diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) and coma or even death, and may also have harmful long-term cognitive and behavioural effects.

"Controlling diabetes in children and adolescents is of particular importance due to the disruptive effects of inadequate glucose control on the developing brain. Individuals with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes mellitus manifest an array of modest functional and structural changes within the CNS, which occur relatively early in the course of the disease, and do not appear to be progressive over time." Dr Christopher Ryan (Pittsburgh, US).

Early diagnosis of diabetes is therefore vital in children and adolescents, to establish adequate control of the disease at an early stage. Anyone involved in the care of children, such as family, friends, school staff or childminders, should be able to recognize the diabetes warning signs of: excessive thirst, frequent urination, weight loss and tiredness. Children may also show the specific symptoms of: lack of interest and concentration, headaches and recurrent vomiting and stomach pain.