

Lenawee Letters: One Child's Journey



At age 7, Jacob, of Adrian was talking with his mom and pointed out a tree in the distance. He said, "Do you see that tree? Did you know that that tree could disappear? Some days it's there and others it's not". Not suspecting anything was wrong, his mom chalked this up to his active imagination. Over the next couple months, he started drinking more and more water and had to use the bathroom frequently. Since it was the height of summer, it wasn't unusual that he might be thirstier. Eventually, Jacob's mom became suspicious that this could be something serious. She took him to his pediatrician to figure out why he was so thirsty, using the bathroom constantly and having blurred vision. They did a urine test, which came back with glucose present. They pricked his finger to test his blood, which revealed that his blood sugar was nearly 600 and he was rushed to the emergency room. Jacob was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

As Jacob's family learned, Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that affects the ability of the pancreas to produce insulin. In the United States, 80 people each day are diagnosed with this disease. The cause of Type 1 diabetes is not entirely known, and there is no cure. He will not grow out of it. It was not caused by anything he did or did not do with his diet and lifestyle. People with Type 1 diabetes are insulin dependent for life.

Life with Type 1 diabetes is a constant challenge for Jacob and those who share his diagnosis. So far in his journey, Jacob has had more than 14,000 finger pricks to test his blood sugar and almost 10,000 insulin injections to sustain his life. He and his family perform a never ending balancing act of insulin, food intake, counting carbohydrates, activity/exercise and juggling all the other factors that affect his blood sugar. This disease is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. Disease management takes place even while he sleeps. Jacob relies on parents and other adults in his daily life to help him manage his disease. Good management helps avoid serious complications that affect major organs including the heart, kidneys, blood vessels, nerve damage and even death.

Jacob joined Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) at the time of diagnosis. CSHCS provides financial help for children with chronic diseases. Jacob and his family can now focus on the management of his disease without worrying about how to afford prescriptions, medical equipment, specialty providers (doctors, hospitals and clinics), co-pays, and transportation needs for medical care.

Jacob remains a happy child living his "new normal" life. He is a very social kid who has the same dreams and goals as other children. Currently he wants to have his own You Tube channel and become the next Dr. Who. Diabetes is not going to stop him from doing whatever he chooses to do in life. Thanks to many advances in tools used to manage this disease, he has the chance to have a long life! He faces his disease head on and is actively learning about his diagnosis to prepare for life as an adult with



Type 1 diabetes. He also attends Diabetes Camp every year to connect with others and to gain the skills needed to manage this disease on his own.

His mom is very proud of his progress and considers him a hero. "Caring for Jacob is an honor and privilege for our family. We are doing all we can to help him learn and grow. We also get to help others right along with him. It has been an amazing journey and we have an amazing son!"

*If your child has any of these warning signs, please see his/her doctor:

- Extreme thirst
- Frequent urination including bedwetting for kids who have already been potty trained
- Drowsiness or lethargy
- Increased appetite
- Sudden weight loss
- Sudden vision changes
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- In infants, diaper rash that does not respond to treatment