



“Daddy, What’s a Pump?”

Published on September 12th, 2014 | by *Brian Hegarty*

Recently, my 2-year-old son looked at my insulin pump. He had a look on his face that showed he was working through something, and that a question was coming.



He looked at my pump. Then he looked at me. Then he looked back at my pump.

“What’s that, Daddy?” he asked.

I’ve told him many times since I started pump therapy almost a year ago what my pump is, and what it does. So I decided to test him to see if he’s been listening.

“What do you think it is, son?” I asked.

“Daddy’s pump,” he said.

“And what does Daddy’s pump do?”

“Medicine,” he answered immediately.

“And why does Daddy need his medicine?”

“So he doesn’t get sick,” he said. My son was very proud he knew the answers and flashed a huge smile.

“That’s right,” I said to my brilliant boy.

From the moment we first found out my wife was pregnant, I thought a lot about how I’d tell our future child about my diabetes. We considered a number of alternatives, but I think three simple steps sum up the way we handle his education: Be honest, keep it simple, and set boundaries.

Be Honest

When my boy was very young, and he saw me taking my Novolog or Lantus pen injections, I made a point of telling him that Daddy is taking insulin.

I also tell him that the pump, which I started using in November of last year, keeps me from getting sick. This is the most important point for him to learn. It’s necessary for me to stay healthy. I get medicine through the tube that goes between the pump and my body, and it helps keep me healthy.

My son has watched me test my blood sugar often, and has asked about that, too. “Testing blood sugar keeps me from getting sick,” I tell him.

“Does it hurt?” he’s asked after seeing the blood on my fingertip.

“No, it doesn’t hurt,” I tell him. “Sometimes things look like they’d hurt, but they really

[Back to Top ↑](#)

Search...

Go →

Insulin Nation is Speech Enabled:



Advertisement

NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION SAVINGS NETWORK



Get the lowest price!
Save up to 75%
on your meds.

Save Today

Advertisement



The only
FDA approved,
non-invasive,
**Nocturnal
Hypoglycemia**
alarm.

Learn More

Get Major Story Updates

Sign up to receive email notifications about new *InsulinNation* stories

Enter your email address

Sign up

InsulinNation will never sell or trade your personal information.

Advertisement

don't."

However, if something hurt, I'd sure tell him. I don't think shielding him from the truth makes any sense at all.

Keep It Simple

There's no sense telling my son that Daddy's pancreas doesn't work, or that my islets of Langerhans are inactive. I don't think his daycare covered the pancreas. But he's very sharp. I believe he was able to extrapolate all of the important info he needed.

Then there's the subject of low blood sugars. One morning I woke up in a bit of a stupor, with my sugar crashing. My wife acted quickly, grabbing a bottle of glucose tablets from the bedside table. My son wanted to know what they were.

Instead of confusing the situation by saying they're fast-acting glucose tablets that will relieve insulin shock symptoms, she thought on her feet and said, "They're special Daddy vitamins. Want to help me give them to him?"

He was all in. He brought the tablets to my mouth and fed me, happy he could help. In a couple minutes, I was back to my old self, with a beaming son saying, "I gave Daddy his vitamins."

Since then, he's offered a number of times to give me my Daddy vitamins, while grabbing the glucose tablets container off the table. I have to tell him that I only need them in emergencies, and that, if he's there, he can help Mommy when I need them again. He's OK with that arrangement.

I just hope he won't have to give me my Daddy vitamins again.

Set Boundaries

In November, when my pump arrived, a new set of issues came with it: How do I talk about my pump with my big guy? The issue came to a head one morning, shortly after I'd started using the pump. My son sat next to me as we watched some Saturday morning cartoons. I felt a slight tug and noticed he had my pump in his hands, and was pressing away at the buttons.

I looked directly at him: "You are not allowed to play with this," I said in a stern voice. "This is Daddy's pump. This is not a toy. You are not allowed to play with this."

He was a little taken aback by my change from cuddly Daddy to the enforcer, but he understood.

"OK," he said.

Since late last year, there have been a few other occasions when I've had to remind him that my pump is not a toy, and that he's not allowed to touch it. I think it's more of a situation where he wants to know more, instead of just wanting to play with the buttons. (I could be wrong, though. Buttons are so interesting for a 2-year-old.)

The important lesson that we keep repeating, though, is that Daddy's pump helps keep me from "getting sicky."

My son is rapidly approaching his third birthday, though. I think that means we'll have to start preparing for the onslaught of "Why" questions that will soon take over all conversation. When they come, I hope to follow the same strategy as before; these three guidelines have worked well so far.

Analysis & Advice
to Improve
Your Life

Learn More

Diabetes Data Decisions

Popular Posts



Understanding Insulin Sticker-Shock Why are some forms of insulin so expensive, and what ha...



Insulin Independent for a Decade Thanks to islet transplant therapy, Jill Eastman hasn't...



I Was Misdiagnosed with Type 2 One man's experience with the uncertainty of a later-in...



Medtronic in Court Over Alleged Insulin Pump Failure The company is being sued for a man's death, and has be...



Coming Out of the Supply Closet as Type 1 A writer tries to embrace his diabetes status at a new ...



Can I Get Insulin Over the Counter? Jennifer Smith of Integrated Diabetes Services answers ...



Insulin Nation

Like

5,043 people like Insulin Nation.



Facebook social plugin

Connect with InsulinNation



About the Author



Brian Hegarty Brian Hegarty is a writer, editor and content strategist who lives in Philadelphia with his wife and 2-year-old son. He was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in 1983. Follow him on Twitter at [@brianhegarty](#), or on <http://type1philly.com>.

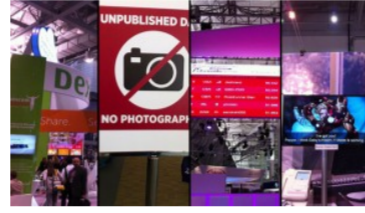
Related Posts



What Diabetes Camp Means for Our Family →



Pilots with Type 1 Restricted on Plane Choices →



Random Observations from the ADA Scientific Sessions →



Coming Out of the Supply Closet as Type 1 →

Share Your Comments



Add a comment...

Also post on Facebook

Posting as **Brian Hegarty** ▾

Comment



Craig Le Fevre · [Follow](#) · Auto Care Center Manager at Walmart

Great post! I have a couple little ones myself. My son was about 3 when I was diagnosed and my daughter is just now 3. Yesterday I caught her sneaking a few of my "daddy vitamins" for herself. I find myself having to share sometimes if I am treating a low. They are very interested in what goes and love my Dexcom. I am cyborg dad! I think your way of handling it is perfect. Give them information they can understand and always be honest.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · September 16, 2014 at 2:55pm

Facebook social plugin



Copyright © 2015 SelfRx. All rights reserved.

Insulin Nation® delivers comprehensive information about the technology and science of diabetes therapy, and curates the best, most relevant news for the 6.5 million people in the US who take insulin – the “Citizens” of Insulin Nation.

Topics covered include diabetes-specific technology and medicine, the science behind a potential cure, wearable and wireless health tech, the rich data produced by meters, pumps, and CGMs, and the people and organizations that impact the everyday lives of our readers.



Healthline

