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# Returning to School in the COVID-19 Era: **Post-Secondary Recommendations**

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The Safe at School Campaign of the American Diabetes Association (ADA) provides this series of recommendations and tips for parents/guardians and students in preparation for the return to school after nationwide school closures due to coronavirus. These recommendations seek to ensure a smooth transmission of safe diabetes management and care from home to school while recognizing the current reality of limited access to diabetes providers and other resources during the coronavirus pandemic.

**ADA's third recommendation** suggests possible COVID-19 related accommodations to request from your college's or other post-secondary institution's disability services office. These additional accommodations may be needed due to the pandemic. A student's legal rights have not changed with the pandemic. College disability office staff and students should work together to create a healthy, safe, and supportive learning environment for students with diabetes.

In addition, schools play an important role in preventing the spread of coronavirus in our communities. People with diabetes might be at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 according to the CDC. Studies show that people with severe chronic illness of all ages are at a higher risk for the worsening of their chronic illness with the onset of COVID-19. While the science continues to evolve on the impact of COVID-19 on patients with chronic illness such as diabetes, it is important to implement added precautions for students with diabetes as they return to school.

- First, register with your college's disability services office to request and coordinate accommodations. Once registered, you can receive services through the office, and the office can assist you in working with professors and other officials throughout the college. Note that many disability services offices have modified their accommodation process to allow students to seek COVID-19 accommodations. In addition, many offices have deadlines for students to register or to request modifications. While it is your responsibility to provide appropriate documentation to support your need or possible need for modifications, some disability offices are offering flexibility in providing required documentation to support requested accommodations.
- Request priority class registration to schedule a time that works best for diabetes planning around meal schedules and times when blood glucose levels are usually in range.
- Seek a single residence hall room and private bathroom, if available.
- Obtain permission to switch to full-time remote learning if facing health challenges due to COVID-19 and/or to avoid exposure.
- Opt out of meal/cafeteria plans and/or be provided with a carry-out option.

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- Use of common areas and spaces on campus should be closed or limited to all students. Gatherings of all students should be discouraged.
- Shared spaces in residence halls such as kitchens and other common areas should be closed.
- Off-campus travel should be limited to reduce potential exposure and to lower the risk of bringing COVID-19 back to campus.
- Schools cannot exclude a student from participating in a school program or activity because of diabetes; however, students should consider the risk associated with extracurricular activities, clubs, sports, and social events.
- Campus staff should undergo coronavirus precaution training prior to the commencement of the school year. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and touch-free thermometers should be purchased by the school for use by the school nurse and other staff members who provide diabetes care to your child.
- Students should stay at home if sick or if other students have a transmittable illness placing other students at risk for contracting the illness.
- Healthy hygiene should be encouraged and reinforced on campus to students and staff.
- Campuses should ensure that ventilation systems are regularly cleaned and operating properly.
- Include precautionary accommodations including, but not limited to: (1) small in-person class sizes; (2) same group of students rather than mixing between groups; (3) staggered or rotating class scheduling to accommodate smaller class size; (4) maintain at least 6 feet social distancing between desks, work stations and students; (5) prohibitions against sharing objects such as musical instruments and keyboards; (6) clean and disinfect desks, counters, work stations, door knobs, handles, light switches, electronics, metal/plastic, drinking fountains, toilets, sinks, faucets, and other surfaces; (8) post signs throughout the campus to promote good hygiene practices and appropriate social distancing; (9) soap, water, and hand sanitizer should always be readily available throughout the campus; (10) require the wearing of cloth face coverings/masks – especially when social distancing is difficult; (11) provide an area of isolation or separate health clinic for students experiencing COVID-19, flu or other symptoms of illness; (12) provide a separate well-health clinic for medication and first aid; (13) limit activities where large groups of students are in close proximity and revise to a small group gathering; and (14) minimize mixing of students in common areas.

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- Students should be promptly notified when another student or staff member is diagnosed with coronavirus, the flu, and another transmittable illness. Students should consult with their provider to determine if they should stay home. If the student stays home the school should provide access to remote learning.
- The student should not be penalized for COVID-related absences and should have access to the same alternative education services as would be provided to any other student who is medically required to remain home under similar circumstances.