



More Wit and Wisdom for kids with diabetes
(and their parents)

Identify Yourself!

"Who are you?"

Don't answer. It's a trick question.

Because it's impossible to tell someone who you are in one word, one sentence, or maybe even with a thousand words or sentences. You are everything you do, and everything you like and don't like. You are a whole body of DNA, eye and hair color, and about a billion other things all put together. Change even one of those things, and the answer to "who are you" changes.

That's one of the reasons people with diabetes get so upset when someone else thinks diabetes is the only thing they are. Having diabetes may be a big part of your life. But you are much more than just "a diabetic."

There are times, however, when letting someone know that you have diabetes is more important than anything else you can say. Sometimes, "diabetes" is the one word they need to know about you. Because it's the one word that can save your life.

We're talking about medical emergencies here. And about the reasons why you should always, always, always wear some kind of medical identification (ID) that lets the world know you have diabetes. Things can happen quickly.

Your blood sugar drops, and you black out. Or, you're fighting the flu, your blood sugar skyrockets and ketoacidosis knocks you for a loop. Or some accident that has nothing to do with diabetes happens and makes it impossible to tell the people helping you that you have diabetes. You can't always keep those things from happening. But everyday, you can and must make sure that if those things do happen, you'll get the right treatment. And that means wearing medical identification.

Attention: I Have Diabetes!

Medical identification provides emergency workers with important information. It allows them to act quickly and to make the right medical decisions for you. Some medicines and treatments work fine for most people, but cause huge problems for people with diabetes. If the nurse in the emergency room or the medic who shows up at your school doesn't know you have diabetes, they have no way of knowing that you shouldn't have a certain drug. Or that you need a certain treatment to deal with a high or low blood sugar.

Medical identification can help emergency workers understand why

your body is doing what it's doing, or why you're acting the way you are. That's important. Because some of the things that happen because of diabetes could be happening for other reasons. For example, some of the things people do when they are having an insulin reaction are the same kinds of things people do when they've been drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana. You may have never drunk alcohol or smoked a joint. But the person taking care of you may not know that. And that honest confusion could be harmful to you.

There's another reason you'll want to be sure the people helping you know you have diabetes. It's that thing called "control." Even if you're injured or unconscious, diabetes still has to be taken care of. Wearing a medical ID lets the person treating you know right away you have diabetes. That way, he or she can check your glucose and make necessary adjustments.

That's especially important if the reason you're being treated is diabetes related. But remember that injury can cause shock and stress. So there's a good chance your diabetes will need some attention even if the problem isn't connected to diabetes.

Excuse Me! Why Is There a Snake on My ID?

You can choose from all kinds of medical IDs. You can wear one as a bracelet, necklace, on your watch, or around your ankle. These are the first places emergency workers check for identification.

No matter which you choose, they all have a couple things in common. Somewhere, your medical ID will carry the word "Diabetes" or "Diabetic." And

every ID uses the image of a snake wrapped around a stick. So what does that HAVE to do with medical emergencies and diabetes?

The answer goes back a few centuries to Greek mythology. And it would make a great movie. Legend has it that the snake and the staff (or walking stick) you'll see on medical IDs belonged to a guy named Asclepius. Greek mythology said Asclepius was the son of Apollo, the god of light, truth, and prophecy.

Now, Asclepius was real smart, and learned everything there was to know about healing. Zeus, king of the gods, wasn't too happy about that. He was afraid that Asclepius knew so much about healing that he could heal anyone of anything. And if that happened, Zeus thought, no one would ever die.

That thought upset Zeus so much that he decided it would be better to kill Asclepius than to have everyone live forever. So, being the big, powerful god king he was, Zeus grabbed a thunderbolt and zapped poor Asclepius!

Of course, that was the last anyone saw of Asclepius. But his story lives on. People still honor him for his knowledge of healing and his desire to make sick people well. And today, people who have dedicated their life to medicine use Asclepius and the snake and staff symbol to remind them the importance of healing.

Seeing that symbol on a bracelet, necklace, or medallion tells the health care worker that the person wearing it has special medical needs.

But Medical IDs Look So Stupid!

If that's the way you see it, you need to take another look.

Medical ID bracelets, necklaces and medallions don't have to look like something only your grandmother would wear. In fact, wearing one can help make you look pretty good!

The one requirement of a medical ID is that it can clearly be seen by a person treating you in a medical emergency. After that, how your ID looks is your decision.

You probably know a lot of kids who wear bracelets and necklaces just for fashion. And you can do the same. Just attach a medical medallion to the jewelry and you'll be both stylish and safe.

There are many companies who make medical IDs just for kids. The styles stretch from dog-tag style designs to name and initial bracelets, and come in just about any kind of metal you can imagine. Start by getting on the Internet and going to your favorite search engine. Type in "medical identification" and you can see hundreds of styles in all kinds of price ranges.

The point is to find an ID you'll feel comfortable wearing every day. One that someday may save your life.

Who Are You?

You are a person with diabetes. At times, you'll have special needs. And you'll want the world to know about those needs. That's why you wear a medical ID.

Once you've done that simple thing to protect yourself, answering the question "who are you" is completely up to you.

Everyday, kids and grownups with diabetes prove they can do anything they

set their minds to. Allowing yourself to dream, and then doing what it takes to make those dreams come true is the best way in the world to prove you are much more than just someone with a disease. You are someone who knows how to take care of yourself, and to get on with life.

To Learn More:

- ★ If you don't already have it, order the American Diabetes Association Wizdom™ kit for your family. They're free to kids with diabetes and are available by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383).
- ★ Diabetes Forecast is a monthly magazine published by the ADA. It's free to members of the American Diabetes Association. Become an ADA member by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES.
- ★ This piece is one in a series about kids and diabetes. We have titles about school, family, discrimination, and more. Call us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383) or download them by logging on to <http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/pod.asp>
- ★ For more information on kids and diabetes, log onto our Web site at <http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/>
- ★ Parents! Subscribe to our Wizdom Parents' E-newsletter by sending an e-mail to wizdom@diabetes.org.
- ★ Questions or comments? Send us an e-mail at wizdom@diabetes.org