

Disability Condition in the Spotlight for this season will include diabetes mellitus.

Thousands of swimmers across the world have diabetes mellitus. Many of these diabetic swimmers are in our own United States. Diabetes mellitus (D.M.) is a medical condition where the child is not able to process glucose (sugar), which is essential for many of our body organs and tissues to function on a daily basis. This loss of cellular uptake and processing of glucose leads to significant growth delays, inability to concentrate due to high levels of circulating sugar, and higher prevalence of community acquired infections. Long term untreated diabetes leads to art disease, lower extremity infections, stroke, and kidney failure. The treatment for DM includes moderation in carbohydrate intake, avoidance of concentrated sweets, and administration of insulin or other medications that potentiate the release of pancreatic insulin. Many of our swimmers take insulin, several times a day, and check their blood glucose levels just before meals, to determine their next insulin dose .

Diabetic swimmers should always carry a candy bar, cookie, or other form of glucose to have in case their blood sugar becomes too low. Officials, marshals, timers, and coaches can be proactive by recognizing any of the signs of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and notifying the coach right away. Some signs of hypoglycemia include lethargy, heightened irritability, nausea, weakness in all muscles, and memory lapses. Often if the child is very sleepy, it may be safer to apply a bit of glucose syrup under the tongue. All diabetic swimmers should wear a medic alert bracelet.