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Type 1 Diabetes: A Non-Fiction Perspective/ Just a Kid: Emily’s Diabetes Story

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This book is dedicated to my niece, Emily Moody, who is braver than I could have ever been at three years old.

This book is also dedicated to the many children who have been or will be diagnosed with diabetes. Never give up your hope of living a "normal" life; you are already living a spectacular one.

Lastly, this book is dedicated to the parents and guardians of children with diabetes. Your consistent care and incredible knowledge is never unappreciated or unacknowledged.
Finally, a special thanks to Kathryn Lee Johnson for all of your help. This book wouldn’t have made it without you!

Just A Kid: Emily’s Diabetes Story

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Dear Readers,

The idea of writing this book has been in my heart since I was first diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes on March 2, 2006 while living in Europe. As a student studying abroad in Prague, Czech Republic, the last thought on my mind was being diagnosed with a lifelong disease. To be honest, when I heard the words in that Czech emergency room, "You have diabetes," I didn’t even understand the disease or its implications and impact it would have on my life. From that day forward, I have taken an earnest and dedicated approach to my new life as a person living with diabetes; day to day I live with obstacles that I will not let dim my spirit. This book is special in my heart because I know it will help so many children, parents, grandparents, teachers, classmates, and friends understand, without prejudice, the disease that is becoming ever more common in our
lifetime. With an open mind and an open heart, I hope you all enjoy and use this book as a learning tool in your homes, classrooms, and communities.

All My Love,

Kristen Moody

Just A Kid: Emily’s Diabetes Story
Table of Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1
How did I find out about diabetes?................................................................................ 3
What is type 1 diabetes?.................................................................................................. 4
Why is insulin important?.............................................................................................. 6
What is blood sugar?................................................................. 11
How can I stay healthy?.............................................................. 16
My life now................................................................................. 22
Hello, my name is Emily. I have diabetes. Maybe you boys and girls have not heard of it before. Don’t worry, I know you will understand after I tell you a story about my life and me, Emily.

Before I start my story, I want to tell you about this book. I use big words to explain diabetes. I put these big words on notecards. This will make it easier for you to understand.
How did I find out about diabetes?

The first part of my story starts when I was 3. I was a normal little girl and I loved to play with my toys and watch cartoons on T.V. One day, I started to feel sick.
This sick feeling made my stomach and my head hurt. I also felt really tired and I felt like I had to go to the bathroom a lot. My parents took me to the doctor. The doctor took me to the hospital. After tests at the hospital, the hospital doctors told me I had diabetes.
What is type 1 diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease. There are two kinds of diabetes: type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is also called juvenile diabetes because kids mostly get it. Type 2 diabetes is different because it happens to mostly older people, like your grandmother or grandfather. This type can be cured, unlike type 1 diabetes.
Type 1 Diabetes (scientists also call it diabetes mellitus) is an immune disorder. This means, my immune system attacks my own body like your immune system might attack the flu or the chickenpox. My immune system attacks my pancreas, an organ that makes insulin. Insulin helps the body to use food as energy. But, my pancreas is sick so it will not make insulin and I need to get it from somewhere else.
Why is insulin important?

**Insulin** carries the food in our bodies to the places it needs to go, just like a purse helps me take things around to different places. Remember how I told you insulin is made in the pancreas? Well, since my pancreas doesn’t...
work anymore, I need to use artificial insulin, or human-made insulin.

Come and see how I start my day! In the morning when I get up for school, I first get dressed into my favorite outfit. Then, I eat breakfast. I really like to eat eggs and pancakes, especially with my brother, Myles. My parents also tell me it is a healthy idea to eat fruit or drink a small glass of orange juice. Because I need artificial insulin, when I am done eating, my mom gives me a shot.
This shot feels just like a shot you get at the doctor, but I get it on the outside of my stomach. Even though I get this shot about five times a day, it still hurts. Sometimes I cry after the shot. But I am starting to be really brave, so now I just close my eyes.
The shot I take is artificial insulin. To take this insulin, I need to inject it through a small, thin needle.
My dad usually puts the needle on my stomach where it won’t hurt as much as my arm. I will take my insulin when I eat food, around four to seven times a day. Taking this shot is scary in the beginning but I am getting used to it. I know this might seem scary to you boys and girls also, but this shot helps to keep me healthy.
Many people use three special ways of taking insulin. I use a syringe, my aunt Kristen uses an insulin pump, and other people may use an insulin pen. All three ways help people with diabetes stay healthy.
What is blood sugar?

Another important part of my day is testing my blood sugar, also called **blood glucose**. This is very important because a blood sugar that is too high or too low can make me feel sick. It could also damage the organs in my body.
When my blood sugar is too low, it is called hypoglycemia. I could start to feel shaky and look sweaty. I could also get grouchy and feel very hungry. Don’t worry, if you see this happening to me, I will just eat some white bread or drink some juice and I will feel better.
If my blood sugar is high, it is called [hyperglycemia](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-sugar/symptoms-causes/syc-20352809). I could feel really tired and my head hurts. Also, I want to drink a lot because I feel thirsty. This will make me go to the bathroom a lot. If you see me acting like this, I could want to go lay down in the nurse’s office until my medicine starts to make me feel better.
Besides feeling different, there is another way I can find out my blood sugar. I use a tool called a **glucometer**. My mom takes a **test strip** and puts it into the right slot on the glucometer. Then, my mom uses a **finger pricker** to get a drop of blood out of my finger. This hurts and I used to cry, but I am getting use to it. My mom tells me I am brave. Once there is a drop of blood on my finger, I put the drop onto the test strip. The glucometer will tell me my blood sugar level very quickly. It is important that I keep my blood sugar numbers between 80 and 120.
Before I take my artificial insulin, I test my blood sugar. This helps me to understand how much insulin I will need to take.
How can I stay healthy?

It is important for me to stay healthy, just like it is important for you to stay healthy. I might have to take some special care that you do not. First, I have to make sure I eat really healthy foods. This means following the guidelines that my food pyramid and my doctor tell me.
Although I love to eat cookies, ice cream, and chocolate, I can only have those sweet foods at very special occasions. If I eat too many bad foods, I will not feel good. It is hard for me to say no to sweets sometimes, so I like it when my friends offer me healthy snacks like applesauce, cheese, and crackers.
I can also stay healthy by exercising. You should exercise, too! My favorite ways to exercise are dancing, swimming, playing on my jungle gym, fishing at the beach, and playing outside. Exercising also helps my insulin to work at its best.
I can stay healthy by keeping my body safe and clean. Staying safe and clean is also important for kids without diabetes. I need to wash and bandage cuts right away, especially on my feet and hands. It is important that I brush my teeth at least two times a day and floss as much
as I can. Also, I like to take a bubble bath at night before bed.
Finally, I have two doctors. My first doctor is a family doctor. You also go to a family doctor. This doctor will give me regular check ups or see me when I feel sick with a cold or the flu.

My other doctor is called an endocrinologist. This doctor helps me with my diabetes. I go to this doctor at least two times a year. When I am at this visit, the doctor will give me a special check up. I like going to both of my doctors because they help me feel good.
I really liked talking to you about my life. My diabetes isn’t anything to be afraid of. It is okay to ask me questions,
that’s what friends do. I sometimes ask my parents questions, too.
I like to do a lot of the same activities you like to do, even though I have diabetes. I love to play outside on my jungle gym, and I have fun chasing my puppy in my backyard. I like when you include me in games at recess. I like when you offer me a healthy snack to eat. I want you to treat me like everyone else. After all, I’m just a kid like you!

I hope you learned from my story that I am normal and special at the same time. My disease isn’t anything to be scared or nervous about. Once you know about it, diabetes is okay to live with. I hope you learned a lot about me!