



The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

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Type 1 diabetes as a risk factor for depression and other adverse outcomes in adolescents and young adults in rural Australia.

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This study aimed to gain an understanding of the needs and concerns of adolescents and young adults with Type 1 diabetes and their parents. In particular we were keen to learn if those concerns or difficulties related to living in a rural area.

In total, 123 young people with Type 1 diabetes, aged between 13 and 26 completed our survey that looked at their wellbeing and their management of their diabetes, and 76 parents completed our parent survey.

PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL	From Country Vic	From City
Young people	123	73	50
Parents	76	55	21

We completed either a focus group or telephone interview with 22 of the teenagers from country areas to talk about their concerns about growing up with diabetes in the country, and their 22 parents participated in separate telephone interviews.

We are extremely grateful to all the young people and their parents who participated and were prepared to give up their time and share their experiences in such an open and frank way. Here is a summary of what they told us:

Most young people with Type 1 diabetes who live in the country didn't see living in the country as being a disadvantage.

Most of the young people did not think that living in the country made managing their diabetes any easier or harder than if they had lived in the city. However some young people and most of the parents said that it was hard to get to good specialist diabetes care in the country and that they worried that they could not get emergency care, for example an ambulance, in a hurry if they needed it.

Several of the young people said that they felt like they were 'missing out' on contact with other kids with Type 1 diabetes because all of the events for young people with

Type 1 diabetes are held in the city. The girls especially said that they would like to have more contact with other kids their age who have diabetes, because their friends at school don't always understand what it's like for them.

Young people with Type 1 diabetes from country Victoria and their parents worry about the same sorts of things.

Both young people and their parents said that their greatest worries were about having hypos at school or when they are playing sport, and about what the long term health complications might be if they don't look after their diabetes. Most kids said that their parents worried too much about their diabetes.

Many of the young people also said they worried about doing injections and finger-pricks at school or in public places and explaining their diabetes to new teachers or friends. They said the hardest thing about having diabetes was always having to 'be prepared' all the time and feeling like they were different from other kids their age.

Whether they live in the country or the city, young people with diabetes worry and this worry makes it hard for them to look after themselves properly.

On average, the young people who participated in our study were more anxious (that is they worried more) than other young people their age without diabetes. Those young people who worried less, took fewer risks with their health (e.g., drank alcohol less often, avoided fights etc.) and were involved in more activities were also the ones who took better care of their diabetes. Young people who thought their doctors and parents were more helpful also took better care of themselves. And the payoff of this more conscientious self care was that those who looked after their diabetes better also had lower HbA1c levels.

We used the findings of the study and the things that the young people and their parents told us, to help us to decide what was important to include on this web site. Over the coming months we will continue to analyse the data and publish the findings of the study in scientific journals.

If you have any further questions about this research, please email Dr Naomi Hackworth at nhackworth@parentingrc.org.au