

November 2, 2010 was a day that would change my life forever. I hadn't been feeling well for nearly a month and a half. It wasn't a major illness. I just had stomachaches and felt tired but the flu had been going around school and my house so I didn't think much of it. My parents weren't worried either but after several weeks of this going on and on and on they decided a trip to the doctor was what I needed! My mom took me to see my doctor, Dr. Pegram. She has been taking care of me since I was a couple of months old. After a regular checkup she told my mom that I would need to have some blood work done. The doctor said that something was definitely wrong and we were going to get to the bottom of it as soon as possible! I like a good mystery as much as the next kid but I wasn't happy to *be* the mystery.

My mom took me right away to have eight tubes of blood taken. It wasn't fun but it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be either. After that I went to my weekly piano lesson. My dad came and picked me up. When I got home my parents said they needed to have an important talk with me. So, we sat down in the living room. My mom sat down on one side of me and my dad on the other. My mom told me that Dr. Pegram had called with some news about my tests while I was at my lessons. She told me that they had discovered that I have type 1 diabetes.

I was so upset and immediately started to cry. My mom and dad held me while I cried. After a few minutes I stopped crying and wanted to find out exactly what this meant. I had some idea because one of my favorite characters from the

Babysitters Club book series, Stacey, has diabetes. That was kind of ironic! At first I thought I wouldn't be able to eat sugar anymore. I was especially upset because my birthday was only a month away and I hated the idea of no birthday cake. My mom explained to me that I would be able to eat everything I always liked but that every single time I ate anything I would have to receive a shot of insulin. I didn't like the word, "shot," so we decided to call them "injections." Whenever someone at our house called it a shot instead of an injection they had to pay me a quarter. I made some good money those first few weeks.

My mom told me that they would do whatever it took to take the best care of me and keep me healthy. She would always, always be here for me to cry or complain to and that she wished she had it instead of me. I wished she had it instead of me too. I told her, "Well, at least it's not celiac!" They had tested me for that too and I love, love, love my gluten.

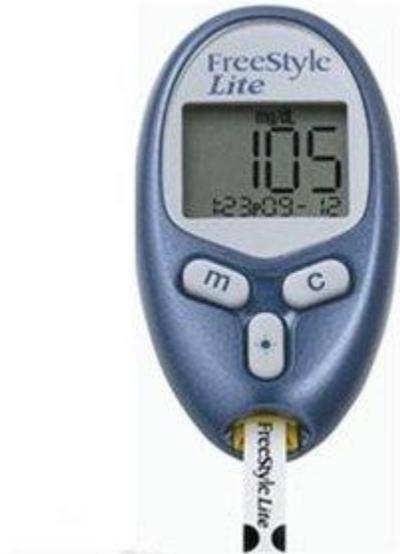
Our first appointment with my diabetes doctor, also known as a pediatric endocrinologist, was for November 4th. The doctor had told my parents to keep me home from school because they would need to keep a very close eye on me all day. It was also the very last day of my life that I would be able to eat whatever I wanted without taking insulin. Since it was my last day of food freedom I really wanted to go and eat at my favorite restaurants. We went to my favorite pizza place first but then I changed my mind and decided I wanted to go to Olive Garden. I ate and ate and ate! It was delicious.

I was really nervous for my first diabetes appointment. I had no idea what to expect and I didn't know what was going to happen. It was going to take four hours and I just couldn't imagine a doctor's appointment that long! First we went to the doctor's office and they had to test my blood sugar with a machine that pricked my finger with a needle to take a blood sample. It really hurt! The nurse told me that it would be the only time I would have to use the doctor's machine if I always remembered to bring my own monitor with me to all my appointments. I told her that I didn't have a monitor and she told me I would soon.

Next we were taken into a regular room like you see at any old doctor's office. Then I met one of my nurses, Nicolette, and my doctor, Dr. Flores. He talked a lot to me and to my parents. My mom had a million questions written down to ask and I thought she was never going to stop. She was talking about glucose testing meters, A1C numbers, lancets, finger pricks, carbohydrates, insulin, insulin pumps and I could go on and on. I had no idea what any of it meant but I soon would know what all of it meant! Dr. Flores had told my parents that he had read my chart and was shocked to see me sitting there and that he couldn't believe he was not meeting me for the first time in the ICU (intensive care unit). That's where he meets over 80% of his patients for the first time because it's hard to find out you have type 1 diabetes before you get really, really sick.

Dr. Flores said my sugar levels were so high that I should have had a terrible time concentrating and should have awful grades. I told him that I had all A's. He said that it really must have been a lot of work for me to do that. It made me feel so good to hear him say such a nice thing to me. He also said that because my blood sugars were so high that they were what had been making me feel so cranky for so long. I think my parents were kind of happy to hear that part. The doctor said he still couldn't believe that I was standing there and not lying in a hospital bed. "You must be a very strong little girl," he said. It made me feel like I could be brave the rest of the day. He promised me that he would make me feel better and he has.

After that part of the appointment we went to what's called a diabetes education class. It was three hours long. The first half hour was learning how to use a blood glucose monitor, blood glucose test strips and a lancet pen. I was so scared to have my finger stuck again! Nicolette stuck her finger and then let me stick both my mom and my dad. They all seemed like it didn't hurt so I felt a little better. Nicolette had given me a pink stuffed gorilla with a rose in its hand to hold onto (and to keep) while I got my finger stuck. I named her, Brave. It turned out to be way better than the first finger stick I had gotten earlier. We tested my blood sugar by putting a little bit of blood onto a white strip with a butterfly on it. The strip was partway into a machine (blood glucose meter). My blood sugar was 642! That's really high. It's supposed to be between 80 and 120.



Blood Glucose Monitor

Next, I was very, very, very scared about having to get insulin injections. I mean they told me that I was going to get one every time I wanted to eat anything and all I could think is, “Oh, c’mon, you have got to be kidding me!” But it was for real. So, my parents learned how to fill up syringes with saline to start. Then they gave shots to each other and then it was my turn to get stuck! I took about a billion deep breaths and then I got my first injection of insulin in the back of my arm. It was the first stick of hundreds that I’ve had so far.



Insulin vial and syringe

My parents took me to McDonald’s for a break and to eat lunch. Once I have an insulin injection I need to eat as soon as possible they had told us. We had

counted all of the carbohydrates in a McDonald's double hamburger and medium fry. I always have to plan ahead for what I want to eat. I'm used to it now but at first it was a little annoying. I also started to drink diet soda instead of regular. It's one of the few "free" (non-insulin requiring) things I can eat or drink. Diet sodas, meats and cheeses are it!

I'm getting ahead of myself with the food information. The food training was the next part of my appointment. I met one of my three dieticians. She was really nice. We learned all about counting carbohydrates, weighing, measuring and figuring out how much insulin I would need for what I eat. I didn't pay too much attention to this part, except for when she talked about "free" snacks! My parents would have to use measuring cups, measuring spoons and a food scale to figure out the correct doses of insulin that I would need for meals and snacks.



Food Scale

The last session of the day was when I got to meet my counselor. We talked about how I was feeling about having diabetes. I told her that I was really nervous about a lot of different things. I didn't want kids to know at school just yet. I was afraid they would make fun of me. I was nervous about having to upset everyone at lunchtime because I would have to leave recess a little early to get my insulin and I would have to be put at the front of the lunch line. I didn't want to be a line "budger." My counselor helped me feel better about all of it. My mom said she would talk to the people at school about a good plan for me. I left feeling nervous but at least I knew the needles weren't too bad.

The first couple of weeks were a huge adjustment! Dinner took forever to actually get to eat because my dad and mom had to weigh and measure everything and then give me insulin. My brothers, Haydn and Eli, were great to me though. They never complained and we would just sit at the table together and talk about our day while we waited to actually eat. The injections got better too. I decided to give an insulin pen a try instead of the syringes. The needles were shorter and hurt even less. I had to have my finger stuck a bunch of times a day but my fingertips were getting used to it. We called them my fingertips of steel! My mom came everyday to school to give me my insulin at lunch so that was kind of weird. There is a special nurse at school that can give insulin too and after a few weeks I got comfortable with her doing it.

School went way better than I imagined! After a few days of only my best friend knowing, I decided to tell the whole class. My teacher, Mrs. Ersland, read a book that I had brought that explained about type 1 diabetes to our class. Then she let the other kids ask me questions. They wanted to know if they could catch it. You can't. They wanted to know about diabetes so I explained some of it to them too. Everyone turned out to be really nice to me about it. Lunch time went okay too. There were a couple of times that I got upset. One time a lady working at recess wouldn't let me go to the nurse's office before recess was over. I'm supposed to go in early to get my insulin but she was new and didn't know. I was crying when I got to the nurse. My mom was there and she talked with my principal and she took care of it. My principal, Mrs. Erickson, has been amazing to me! She always helps me at lunch if things don't go as planned or if I need to get to the front of the line. She really cares about making me feel better. Mrs. Erickson has a secretary named Mrs. Bosquez. She has a member of her family that has type 1 just like me! She told me that she would help me too if I ever need it when I come to the office. It made me feel so much better.

I was starting to get a little more used to my new life with type 1 diabetes. A few weeks before my ninth birthday, my mom showed me a video online about an insulin pump that didn't have any strings attached to it. She explained to me that it would replace all of the injections I had every day. I didn't want it at first. I hate new things! They make me nervous. Then a few days later she introduced me to a friend of hers that has a son with type 1. He wears the same pump she

showed me online and it looked really cool! I got to try it out and it wasn't so bad. He also had a cool thing called a continuous glucose monitor (CGM). It would mean way less finger sticks for me! I really, really, really wanted to get that too! My dad & mom told me that was the plan.



OmniPod Insulin Pump

We had to go to some classes to learn about insulin pumps and CGMs. In January of 2011, my parents filed a bunch of paperwork and we had to wait for our insurance company to say okay. The wait felt like a year! My parents had told me we probably wouldn't get the pump or the CGM right away. So, when we got the news in the middle of January that I could get my insulin pump I was shocked, surprised and excited! We got the insulin pump and had to take a training class about how to use it. My dad and mom got to wear them too. My heart felt like a tornado the first time we had to put an insulin pod on me! My counselor told me to try singing while the needle went in to distract me. It worked and I still do the singing.

A few days after I got the pump we found out that I could maybe get the CGM but I would have to wear one for a 5-day trial first. I was not happy. My dad and mom took me to the diabetes center and I got my first taste of the CGM. It wasn't so bad but it didn't tell me my blood sugars like I thought it was going to because it was the trial. After five days my dad took me back and we got the great news that night that I got the CGM!

The CGM is awesome! My fingers don't have to get stuck ten times a day anymore and my parents don't wake me up in the middle of the night to test me anymore. There are two main parts to my CGM. It has a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter attaches to me and the receiver receives blood glucose readings and displays them. All my parents or I have to do is take a look at my CGM receiver and we know if my blood sugar is high, low or good! It even has arrows that tell me if my blood sugar is going up or down. If it gets too high or too low it beeps at me and that makes me not worry about hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) anymore. I love it!



CGM receiver



CGM transmitter

So, type 1 diabetes is not so bad. I sure wish I didn't have it. It would be nice if doctors and scientists could cure it. It has made me realize that my parents would do anything for me! I love them even more than I did before my diabetes started. That's my story and it's just the beginning.

