

Ellie educates her school on condition

LIFE DOESN'T STOP WITH DIABETES

S EVEN-YEAR-OLD Ellie Noone from the Ennis Road, Limerick, is proof that with the right supports and education, children with Type 1 diabetes can live life to the full.

Ellie, in turn, has been educating her classmates at the Model School, O'Connell Avenue, on her condition through a collaborative poster project on living with type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM).

Speaking at the Model School, Prof Clodagh O'Gorman, Consultant Paediatrician in Diabetes and Endocrinology, University Hospital Limerick (UHL), said: "Most diabetes in young children and adolescents is type 1 diabetes mellitus and so children like Ellie require insulin injections. Type 1 is quite different to type 2 diabetes, which is more common in adults.

"Type 1 can be difficult to manage but our young patients, supported by their families and their schools as well as by the specialist team in UHL, are really quick at picking up on what they need to do and Ellie is a great example of this."

Ellie's mum Hazel and dad Joe recalled their daughter was only four when diagnosed.

"I will always remember Ellie's diagnosis, not only for the terrible fright Joe and I got but also the sheer irony that it was Easter week and the house was full of sugar. In April 2015, over a few days Ellie began to feel ill with flu-like symptoms. Joe and I couldn't quite put our finger on what was wrong with her. Having

gone through the usual parent protocols: temperature monitoring, Calpol, rest; nothing seemed to add up. She was always a very well, healthy and particularly active child, rarely had any sick days and was a livewire. This was unlike her. She started complaining of tummy ache and visiting the little girls room a lot; she was up at night asking for drinks and this excessive thirst got progressively worse.

"One Sunday she took a turn and became really unwell. We immediately rushed her to Shannondoc where thankfully the doctor on call that day was quick off the mark and after checking her ketone levels through a simple urine test, discovered instantly that her sugar levels were through the roof.

"At this point Ellie was immediately admitted to the high dependency unit in The Children's Ark at UHL with diabetic ketoacidosis. As a family we have no direct family history of diabetes and Ellie's medical team believe Ellie's diagnosis was as a result of a virus attacking her pancreas.

"We were blessed to have Professor Clodagh O'Gorman and her team at UHL as Ellie's medical team. It was an extremely difficult time for us as a family but with the amazing support from our friends and family, and Ellie's strength, we got through it. Clodagh and her team were quick to train us up in everything we needed to do to manage Ellie's blood sugars and keep her healthy on a daily basis.

It's amazing how quickly one can learn something so intricate when there is such a

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precious life in the balance.

"Ellie is a fantastic girl and is probably more active than most seven-year-olds. Joe and I couldn't be more proud of how she has taken her diagnosis and turned it on its head. Ellie is a positive, outgoing, sporty and creative seven-year-old and she refuses to let her condition get in her way," said Hazel.

Ellie's dad Joe plays a huge role in managing Ellie's diet.

"Managing Type 1 Diabetes can be a minefield and requires daily if not hourly adjustments to insulin requirements. We do our best to count Ellie's carbohydrates/sugar intake and match it closely with her insulin levels but at times it can seem like a lottery. Many different factors contribute to Ellie's levels including sport, hormones, weather, illness and even mood. We have learned a lot as a family about different food groups and the



ABBY CHOSEN FROM THOUSANDS

ABBY Dillon, a little girl from Cork with Down Syndrome, is one of the new faces of Glenisk's Organic No-Added-Sugar Baby Yogurts. Whittled down from more than 4,500 competition entries, Abby was one of 14 finalists chosen.

Proud mum Anne Dillon, from Ovens in Co Cork, and her family are so excited and proud of Abby. Anne hopes the campaign will help fight misconceptions about people with Down

Syndrome and said, "There are so many misconceptions and old-fashioned stereotypes about people with Down Syndrome. We're so proud of Abby and I think visibility in the media is an important step towards awareness, breaking down those stereotypes, and ultimately acceptance."

Abby's seven-year-old brother James and four-year-old sister Amy (pictured right) are also



effects of sugar on our health. Certain sugars drive Ellie's bloods nuts but with the correct balance Ellie can eat what she wants. We don't deprive her and she gets to enjoy regular treats with her peers," explained Joe.

As well as helping mum and dad look after her two younger brothers (JJ, 5, and Jamie, 2), Ellie described how she keeps her diary full almost all week.

"On Mondays I swim; on Tuesdays I chill; on Wednesdays I do gymnastics; on Thursdays I swim; on Fridays I swim again and on Saturdays I am hoping to start stage school," Ellie said with a glint in her eye.

Last year in senior infants, Ellie had the idea to educate her classmates on type 1 diabetes and with the help of her Muinteor Brefni McCarthy, they decided on a poster project. This involved Ellie distributing pages to each of her classmates to draw a picture

of what diabetes meant to them. Now staff and classmates alike are fully up to speed.

"Here in the Model School, Deirdre Murphy, Ellie's SNA, is incredible. Without her support and the support of her teachers and the school principal Mr O Murchu, we would not have the peace of mind that we have for Ellie's safety. Generally, Ellie herself is very much in control of her own blood sugars. She knows how she feels; she knows how and when to check her bloods; and she knows when and where to inject herself with insulin. Ellie is very independent and always has been since ever before she was diagnosed," said Hazel.

Prof O'Gorman said Ellie was one of close to 200 children and adolescents attending paediatric diabetes services at UHL.

"We also work with schools in the region and we organise an annual education session

in paediatric diabetes for teachers, delivered by the paediatric multi-disciplinary team.

This is aimed at teachers who have children with T1 diabetes in their classroom. Almost 130 teachers attended this year's event. I know that here in The Model School, led by Priomhoide O Murchu, staff have been very supportive of Ellie and her family in managing her diabetes," Prof O'Gorman added.

University Hospital Limerick has a skilled children's diabetes team, comprising three clinical nurse specialists and a children's diabetes dietitian. And in recent weeks, the service has received a significant boost with the appointment of a second consultant in Dr Orla Neylon.

Ellie with, from left, Anne King, first class teacher; Brefni McCarthy, senior infants teacher; and Deirdre Murphy, SNA.

really excited about their sister's news. Abby attends the Down Syndrome Centre Cork and Down Syndrome Cork and mum Anne said, "When Abby was born it was a scary time for us because we didn't know any other babies with Down Syndrome. If we knew then what we knew now it wouldn't have been as scary. People should understand that people with Down Syndrome are more alike than they are different."

