



# The Burden of Diabetes on **MOTHERS**

😊 Children with Diabetes\*

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## The Burden of Diabetes on Mothers

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Type 1 diabetes is a lot of work – it requires almost constant management to keep blood glucose levels close to recommended targets. This workload can be even more challenging when you are responsible for managing your child's diabetes because you only have so much control over their food intake, activity, and everything in between that can affect blood glucose levels. And when it comes to managing diabetes for the child in the family, research shows that most often it is the mother who is handling the diabetes management.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, the pandemic and lockdowns have illuminated underlying challenges in our society, and the increased burden on mothers versus fathers is no exception. According to the Pew Research Center, among 2,029 parents with children under the age of 18 in the U.S., moms who were working remotely were twice as likely report having a lot of childcare duties while working.<sup>2</sup> Mothers were also more likely to reduce work hours to keep up with the demands of their children and family.

Recent research out of Germany showing that mothers are more likely to be responsible for diabetes management should not be surprising. Key findings from the 1,144 families surveyed include:

- Mothers were 82% of respondents and 19% were single parents.
- The number of unemployed mothers increased from 25.8% before diagnosis to 33.7% in the first year following their child's diagnosis.
- Among mothers working before diagnosis, 15.1% stopped working and 11.5% reduced their working hours.
- For fathers, only 1.2% switched to part time and 0.6% stopped working after the diagnosis (out of 986 fathers)

The authors of this research discuss the various challenges associated with the gender differences noted in the study. They suggest reasons being socially motivated due to societal gender-roles, the gender pay gap, and the many challenges in finding childcare that can support a child with diabetes. They also suggest that more research should be conducted to understand what the reasons for these disparities in order to be able to help solve the problem.

This is just one of many of the challenges in diabetes management, but something that is worth exploring and addressing to improve outcomes. Given the recent worldwide report that out of 520,392 children and adults with type 1 diabetes, most have sub-optimal glycemic control, looking at new ways to address diabetes management may be necessary.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, many studies have shown that psychosocial factors affect diabetes outcomes in children.<sup>2</sup>

Finding the right support for yourself and your family can be pivotal for success in diabetes management. Hopefully the research discussed here will encourage more equal distribution of labor within families and within society. Even without the added layer of gender roles, diabetes management and family dynamics can be difficult to navigate and having open and honest conversations about how diabetes is managed can be extremely helpful.

For all you moms out there, we see you and appreciate all that you do. And we hope that you are able to find the support you need for your mental and physical wellbeing because YOU are important, too!

You can view the [recorded session](#) from Fall FFL 2021 where Dr. Jessie Wong, diabetes psychologist, presents more information about families managing diabetes. Also, for moms, our MoFFLs group (Moms of Friends for Life) meets the first Monday of every month via Zoom at 8 pm Eastern. Sign up for our next session at [cwd.is/MomsZoom](http://cwd.is/MomsZoom).

## References

1. [Long-term Occupational Consequences for Families of Children With Type 1 Diabetes: The Mothers Take the Burden](#)
2. [The pandemic has highlighted many challenges for mothers, but they aren't necessarily new](#)
3. [International comparison of glycaemic control in people with type 1 diabetes: an update and extension](#)