

Teens tell it how it is

Teenagers from around the country tell us how they manage their diabetes and what advice they would give to other young people who are newly diagnosed, writes **Sheila O'Kelly**

Sara-Louise Bonnar

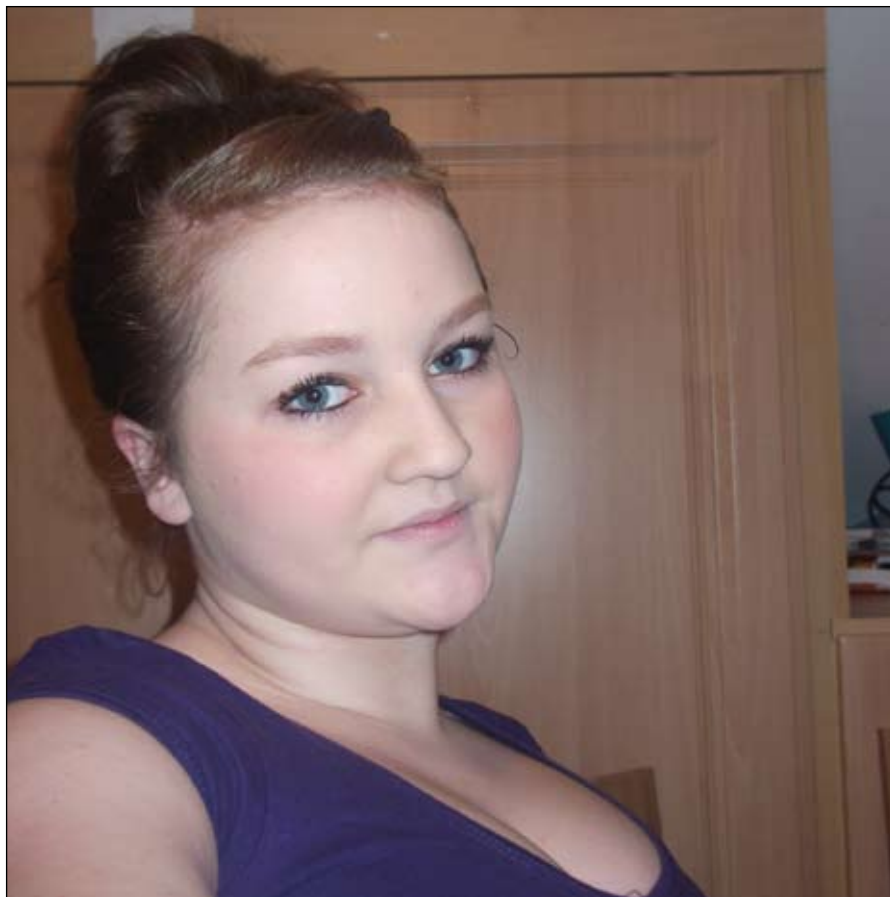
My name is Sara-Louise Bonnar. I'm 13 years old. I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when I was 14 months old. I was diagnosed through a urine test when I had several reoccurrences of a kidney infection.

I don't remember my life without diabetes because I was so young when I was diagnosed. I had a rocky start to my diabetes life and had several seizures due to hyperglycaemic episodes. At my worst point that year I had 49 seizures in 31 days. I celebrated my second birthday in Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin, Dublin.

Being diagnosed so young, injections, needles, blood testing and hospitals were second nature. It wasn't all negative, through Diabetes Ireland I connected with people my age that had diabetes and made great friends for life. We have an annual day trip to the DAC in Bundoran where we almost forget about diabetes for a day and just have fun.

Although it sounds easy to just pack up and leave diabetes behind for a day, hour, minute or even a second, diabetes is always with you and controls a certain part of your life.

On September 24, 2007 my life was touch and go. I had gone into a deep DKA coma and doctors were unsure whether or not I would pull through, but with the help of staff at Letterkenny General Hos-



Sara Louise Bonnar: was diagnosed at 14 months of age and has come through many medical crises

pital and the support of family and friends I made a full recovery.

Diabetes doesn't mean your life is over; it's simply opening up a new window of friends and opportunities to reach personal goals. I'm lucky to have the great support of my school friends and my great second year class at Deele College. Within the school I do several extra-curricular activities such as Girls Active, a weekly class of sport.

Outside of school I also have a very hectic schedule. I do Irish dancing twice a week for two hours each day on a Tuesday and Friday and I do scouts on a Monday. Diabetes hasn't stopped me from achieving any of the goals in life I wish to.

Although, when I was younger, I spent a few days each month in hospital I managed to keep up with my school work and

I'm now doing all honour subjects for my Junior Certificate in third year.

Music is a huge part of my life. My main inspiration is Nick Jonas from the Jonas Brothers. He too has diabetes and he never lets it stop him. He has written several songs about his diabetes such as 'Who I am' and 'A Little Bit Longer' he inspires me to get through the small daily struggles with diabetes.

My advice to anybody, young or old, diagnosed with diabetes is to never let it slow you down. We all want to experience the highs and lows in life, but diabetes just puts a few speed bumps on the road to success – although I have no doubt diabetes will never slow me down completely.

Although people are all searching for a cure, I wouldn't give my diabetes up for

LIFE STORIES



Fiachra Moloney: has adapted well to diabetes and continues playing all his sports

the world. It makes me who I am and what I have achieved with it is remarkable.

I hope this article helps children, teens and adults deal with and live with diabetes. Also always tell a friend in school or youth group or wherever, because I know I couldn't have made it through school without my two best friends Roisin and Claire.

Fiachra Moloney

My name is Fiachra Moloney and I live in Nenagh, County Tipperary. I am 13 years old and I am in second year in St Joseph's CBS Nenagh.

When I was 12 years old I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Before I was diagnosed I was feeling very tired, thirsty, I had pains in my stomach and I was going to the toilet a lot. My first reaction to being diagnosed was that I was very surprised and this was all very unexpected. I was surprised when they told us at the hospital that I would be staying there for a week.

After a couple of weeks everything had settled down and I knew what I was doing and it had become a part of my life.

I adapted very quickly even during my time in the hospital I was doing all my own injections and readings. I was

also managing the amounts of insulin I needed. For the first couple of months I was checking my ketones regularly.

When I was going back to school I was anxious about how things would go, I found there was a lot more attention towards me than before. A lot of my friends were asking about my condition and were curious about my health. Everyone was very supportive.

I have always played soccer, hurling and football and I have never let diabetes get in the way of my sports and activities. I plan my diabetes around my day. I have gone many places since getting diagnosed and never had any problems, even in airports.

My advice to any teenager who has been newly diagnosed with diabetes is to have some sort of identification on you and always carry your kit. Diabetes doesn't change your life hugely. Many famous athletes have diabetes and are very successful.

Joshua Landzaad

My name is Joshua Landzaad, I live in Cork and I am 15 years old. I was diagnosed on 27 December 2011. I am in third year in secondary school.

Before I was diagnosed I was getting very thin and I was looking very pale. I just felt very tired and lethargic. My granddad has diabetes, but he is the only other member of the family who does.

When I was diagnosed, it was just a bit of a shock at first, thinking well this is how it's going to be for the rest of my life and stuff like that.

I am quite a sporty person and at the start I found it quite difficult to get all the ratios and stuff like that right.

But I got help from the hospital and we (Joshua and his parents) worked it out ourselves really. I am still doing as much sport as I was before I was diagnosed.

My friends were a bit shocked and a bit worried at first, but they got used to it and I can inject in front of them. I have missed a day here and there since I was diagnosed, but not really any more than the average person would.

I am trying to give support to other



Joshua Landzaad: is supporting other teenagers with diabetes at Cork University Hospital

teenagers at the Cork University Hospital. I haven't completely sorted it out yet but I'm trying to, for my transition year, sort something out where like I could go and talk to people.

I am hoping to do a work experience placement in the Cork office of Diabetes Ireland.

Mostly, I talk about my own experiences and just let them know that at the start it can be a bit overwhelming when the nurses or people are just explaining it to you and you just find it hard to take it all in.

The first thing I'd say to a teenager who has been newly diagnosed is just to stay positive and not to let it get you down. If you start thinking about it negatively it'll just really annoy you for pretty much the rest of your life.

I just take my mind off it. A lot of my day is taken up by sport so that just really takes my mind off it. It hasn't affected my life that much.

We will continue these Life Stories of teenagers in the next issue with contributions from: Rachel O'Neill, Orla Gardiner, Laura Bourke and Ian Duggan