

Top Parent Blogs for Raising Children with Type 1 Diabetes

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Blog, diabetes, parent

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and adolescents. As of June 2014, more than 200,000 youth younger than 20 years are reported to have been diagnosed with diabetes ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014](#)). Type 1 diabetes (T1D), or insulin-dependent diabetes, is most often diagnosed in children, adolescents, and young adults. From 2001 to 2009, the prevalence of T1D is reported to have increased more than 19% among youth ([Dabelia et al., 2014](#)). Learning to live with T1D impacts the entire family, particularly parents who must share in the responsibility and accountability of managing this complex disease with their children.

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Parents of children with T1D are encouraged to become involved in support groups and advocacy organizations to connect with others who share the same “highs and lows” of learning to live with T1D. This edition of *On the Web* will focus on blogs by parents of children living with T1D. Information about how to evaluate the quality of information on a health-related blog will also be addressed.

ABOUT BLOGS

The Web 2.0 movement focuses on social media technologies (e.g., wikis, podcasts, and Web logs [shortened term: blogs]) that give users the opportunity to collaborate openly with other Internet users. Blogs were one of the first social media tools to be developed that allowed users to share information and connect with each other. Blogs are best described as personal Web pages or journals updated on a regular basis by an author (or blogger), with the goal of building a community of persons who share a similar passion ([Blog, 2014](#)). Today, the concept of blogging extends beyond a single author to multi-author blogs (teams of bloggers), as well as microblogging systems (e.g., Twitter and Tumblr; [Blog, 2014](#)). The focus of this article is primarily on single-author parent blogs focused on T1D; multi-author blogs and blogs maintained by major diabetes research and advocacy organizations are not included.

Patients have commonly used blogs to share their perspectives, especially in relation to their experiences

Blogs are best described as personal Web pages or journals updated on a regular basis by an author (or blogger), with the goal of building a community of persons who share a similar passion.

TABLE 1. Criteria and clues for evaluating the quality of blogs

Criteria	Clues
Authority Author(s) Sponsor (if any) Tone of the blog Active and up to date Life span of the blog Blogroll with links to other credible sites	About (Me) page: Name, expertise, education, credentials, affiliations Contact page or details Googling name of the blog or author's name Frequent posts and posting of new content (at least in the past 3-4 months) Other credible sites link to blog Active links to other credible sites Honors and awards
Purpose (or focus) Title Purpose Disclosure(s) Intended audience Biases stated up front Disclaimer	Check URL or domain Interesting and clear title About (Me) page Posts reflect purpose of the blog Good writing tone, no typos or misspellings Link to disclaimer information
Design and management Professional appearance Theme fits the content Posts short, regular, and reverse chronological order Headings, subheadings, and related content easy to find Internal search engine Permanent links to specific posts Feedback mechanisms	Interesting title Clean, simple design with easy navigation Can post or link to posts easily No comment spam Categorizes comments and posts Archives of older content Links to sources active and verifiable May include feeds (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) Advertisements, if any, clearly labeled
Content and coverage Identifies intended audience Content theme is consistent Life span of blog Posts and comments thoughtful and respectful Reasonable interpretation of personal insights and experiences Creativity and currency of information Credible sources Disclaimer	Freshness and frequency of posts and comments Dated posts written in an engaging writing style, appropriate reading level Free from typographical and grammatical errors Provides references to reputable types and sources of information Other credible sites link to blog (Google search) Honors and awards, reviews by others
Note. URL = uniform resource locator.	

in living with a chronic illness (Grajales, Sheps, Ho, Novak-Lausher, & Eysenbach, 2014). However, limited research is available on the health-related benefits of blogs and other social media. The potential health-related benefits of blogs and other related social media technologies include increased opportunities for patient engagement and empowerment (eHEALTH INITIATIVE, 2014).

EVALUATING BLOGS

A healthy amount of skepticism should always be exercised when evaluating blogs or any Web site. Blogs commonly include the perspectives and experiences of a single individual (or blogger) and incorporate the ideas of the active readership that posts responses. As such, opinions and experiences expressed on a blog may not reflect information found in professional publication channels. Parents and health care professionals are challenged to determine exactly what constitutes the authority of a blogger, how to weigh personal

opinion versus expert knowledge, and discern the informational context of blog content.

Blog software tools (e.g., WordPress and Blogger) are freely available to help design and manage content on blogs. The essential characteristics of a blog include a title, regular entries or posts (in reverse chronological order), a body or main content area, an archive of earlier posts, a comments section, and links to other related sites (WordPress, n.d.). Links to an “about page” and a contact page should also be found on the blog, usually in the header or footer. An uncluttered design and ease of navigation are essential for a blog that hopes to attract lively conversation and an active readership.

The need for full disclosure is of particular importance when using blogs for health-related issues (Brown, 2011). Key elements of disclosure that a person should look for on a blog include the author's purpose and interests (or sponsorship) behind the blog and the author's biography. A link to a disclaimer should also be

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