

In the two weeks leading up to Dawson's diagnosis, we had no idea what was going on. All of the symptoms were innocuous. Dawson had been drinking a lot of water. We had written it off to being winter time. We were all drinking water due to the dry air in the house. He was moody. Well he was a three year old. He had started having pee accidents. We attributed it to the potty training process. The night before we took him to the doctor, his symptoms were especially noticeable. When I walked into his classroom, he was sitting in a chair sobbing. The teacher said she had no idea why he was crying. She said nothing in particular had happened. As soon as we got in the car, he wanted water to drink. He said he was thirsty. He drank a whole bottle of water on the way home. When we got home, he ran to the bathroom sink and turned the sink faucet on and was drinking from the faucet. Then he wanted another bottle of water. Between then and bedtime he consumed massive amounts of water. Then he was complaining that his stomach hurt. It was extended from all of the water he had drank...and yet he was still wanting more water. We decided we would call the doctor in the morning.

The next morning, February 17, 2017, I called and scheduled an appointment with his pediatrician for that afternoon at 5pm. In an hour, the doctor's office called and said the doctor wanted to see Dawson right away. As soon as we arrived, they took us to an exam room. They had him pee in a cup. The nurse came in straight away and asked if he had a fruity smell to his breath. I said, "Yes, but we have just contributed it all to morning bad breath." The nurse said she wanted to test his blood sugar. Between the two tests we were told his blood sugar was extremely high (498) (a normal blood sugar is in the range of 80-120) and that he had large ketones in his urine (large ketones represent acid in the body that is created by not having insulin). The doctor came in and said she believed that he was going to be diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes and that we needed to go to the ER right away.

So we did. The doctors office had called ahead and told them we were coming. We were taken straight back. Blood tests were taken, an IV was started and the doctor came in shortly thereafter and said he was Type 1 Diabetic. The next two hours were a blur. A diabetes educator came in and talked to us about Type 1 Diabetes, how to check blood sugar, how to give shots and how to count carbs. Then a Nurse Navigator for an endocrinologist came in and gave us information on dosing with insulin and handed us a bag from an organization called JDRF. JDRF stands for Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. The bag had several supplies in it including a notebook for keeping blood sugar numbers and dosing records, a bag to carry Dawson's diabetic supplies in, a book about diabetes and finally, RUFUS. Rufus is a stuffed bear that Dawson has cherished. You see, Rufus has diabetes too and he "has to have his blood sugar checked and he has to be given insulin" as well. Rufus was very helpful to us in the beginning when Dawson was having to have insulin injections (aka shots) 5-7 times a day. What three year old likes shots? Especially that many a day.

We left the hospital later that day, feeling like a deer in the headlights. We were so overwhelmed, scared and worried. We were told that we were to check his blood sugar every morning at 2am. This was to make sure that he didn't have a low blood sugar and slip in to a coma. We didn't sleep the first night at all...and for several nights thereafter we took cat naps. We'd check to make sure he was breathing. We were checking his blood sugar hourly. It was horrible sleep deprivation. How could we possibly sleep when there was a slight chance Dawson could slip away while sleeping. We went to Diabetes Education classes over the next few weeks, met with a Diabetes Educator and learned about how carbohydrates, proteins and fats impact blood sugar and insulin absorption. It was so much information to take in while being sleep deprived.

We've come a long way since the day Dawson was diagnosed. He has since started wearing a Continuous Glucose Monitor two months after diagnosis, which tells us his blood sugar every 5 minutes. It's a critical piece of equipment that helps us keep Dawson alive...daily, even hourly. He also now wears an insulin pump, which gives him insulin as we direct it to. This way he only has a shot once every three days, when we install it, versus 5-7 shots a day. We know more medical terms than we ever did before. We started being able to sleep "more". We began taking turns checking blood sugars during the night. Every other night is my night. When his Dexcom is working, I sleep great. When it is malfunctioning (it is mechanical equipment that has glitches), I don't sleep. I can't. There are nights where we fight low blood sugar all night. There nights we spend fighting to get his blood sugar under control. Overall, both of us rarely sleep through the night anymore. I liken it to trying to keep someone out of your house that is going to harm your child. You know the person is outside trying to get in YET you can't lock any doors or windows. You just have to stay vigilant and try to figure out what door or window it's going to try and get in to next and run to protect your child. It is exhausting, stressful and relentless. Our lives have not been the same since his diagnosis on February 17, 2017.

Dawson has a twin brother, Carter. We were told that since the boys are fraternal twins, Carter only had an 8% chance of being diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Not bad odds as far as we were concerned.

Fast forward 1 year and two months later, April 16, 2018. We had been out of town for a week. This was the longest time period of being away from the boys. Carter had started wetting the bed. We attributed it to him being upset that we had been out of town. After almost two weeks of accidents, one night in the middle of the night, we decided to check Carter's blood sugar. His blood sugar level was 497. Our heads and hearts dropped.

I got dressed and took him to the ER and told them I thought he was Type 1 Diabetic. In less than an hour it was confirmed and we began the process all over again, only this time knowing so much more. We both cried and grieved and then we said to ourselves and each other, "Well, time to suck it up Buttercup. You know all about this. Now straighten up that crown and get busy." This time around we had more knowledge. We got busy ordering the equipment that we would need to keep him alive.

The week after Carter was diagnosed we went as a family to pick up our diabetic alert dog, T'Challa (a chocolate Labrador retriever) from Tattle Tail Scent Dogs in Utah. After Dawson was diagnosed in 2017 we researched them and decided to get one. We had been on a waiting list for over a year for her. Diabetic Alert Dogs are, simply put, life savers. T'Challa has been trained to detect low blood sugars and she is relentless about alerting us when she does detect it. She usually lets us know a low blood sugar is on it's way, at LEAST 15-30 minutes ahead of the Continuous Glucose Monitor that the boys wear. She is another level of protection against the thief in the night sneaking in to our home.

It has ALL been an adjustment. TWO Type 1 Diabetics and a Diabetic Alert Dog. Our quality of life has changed dramatically. The boys' quality of life have changed dramatically. We are ALL still learning. Mahnaz and I still take turns checking blood sugars every other night. We are still sleep deprived most days.

But our boys are alive and we are grateful for that.

Deciding for Dawson and Carter to go to a new school this past summer was a very difficult choice for us. It is a nerve wracking, emotional process leaving the attention and care of

your Type 1 Diabetic sons with someone else. We are literally entrusting the lives of our sons to the teachers, administration and nursing staff at LeafSpring. When we say this we mean it literally. Every time (almost every day) they catch a low blood sugar and treat it, they are absolutely saving our sons' lives. EVERY TIME. I hope that they understand the enormity of this statement. They commit a lifesaving act for our sons on a daily basis. They absolutely deserve the highest amount of gratitude from us.

*Brenda*

*"My theory in friendship and love is to be exactly who I am. This will serve as a beacon to the right people."- Rebecca Thom*