

MEDIA RELEASE

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Happy Harper's pumping first birthday

Two year old Shell Cove resident Harper Climo has just celebrated a very special first birthday. It is one year since the cheeky toddler first began using an insulin pump.

Harper was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the age of 11 months, and after a short period of her parents trying to manage the condition with multiple daily injections, became amongst the youngest Aussies to begin insulin pump therapy.

Mum Michelle believes that the improved control and flexibility of pumping has made a big difference to her little girl.

"Within a week we had noticed a change in her. It sounds corny but she had a spark in her eye – you could see a change in her personality just through having better control of her blood glucose levels," Michelle said.

"She was obviously feeling better and you could see a difference in her."

Insulin pump therapy is indicated for Type 1 diabetes, and is an alternative to multiple daily injections.

Insulin pumps have a reservoir with a two-to-three day supply of insulin, which is delivered through an infusion set – a tiny disposable tube and a soft cannula that is typically inserted under the skin in the abdominal area. Infusion sets are generally changed by the patient every two-to-three days.

A pump automatically delivers a constant rate of insulin (basal rate) to keep glucose levels in the desired range between meals and overnight.

Insulin pumps are easy to program and users can customise a variety of insulin delivery rates to match their individual lifestyle needs. With a pump, needles are not required to deliver insulin. At the touch of a few buttons, patients can deliver extra insulin (bolus) for food and to prevent excessive rises in blood glucose levels.

The intensive therapy delivered by an insulin pump can also help limit high (hyperglycaemia) or low (hypoglycaemia) blood glucose levels.

Studies have shown that if patients with Type 1 diabetes are able to achieve improved control of these 'highs' and 'lows' they will be able to avoid or delay on the onset of complications.

Being an active toddler, it had been difficult to get good control of Harper's blood glucose levels with multiple daily injections.

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“Harper coped really well with the injections, but it was just unpredictable.

“She was a typical toddler. She would eat at some meals, but not others and she was so active. When we thought her levels would be ok, she'd actually be really high. It was really hard to get her blood glucose to a good level. I think she was pretty much high for the first three months,” said Michelle.

A family trip to Disneyland planned for more than a year was the deciding factor that convinced Michelle and husband Mark to try Harper on the pump. Because pump therapy can give flexibility around meal times and exercise, it meant that the family could make the most of their holiday.

“I don't know how people travel with little ones on injections,” said Michelle.

“The pump made air travel so easy and our holiday was awesome. We were so busy and active, lots of things to see and do and it was all made easier with the pump.

“Our days at Disneyland were from 8am till 10pm and Harper ate when she liked – and mostly *what* she liked too. We didn't have to act any differently to other families on holidays.”

Michelle and Mark are now keen to share their experience with insulin pump therapy with other parents of young children with diabetes.

“I've been surprised by how little a lot of people know about it. When we first went to our local support group, Harper was the only child on the pump and they just thought she was from outer space!

“The other parents at the support group didn't understand it. As people have learnt more about it more and more are keen to try it.”

Michelle and Mark have also found that insulin pump therapy has an added bonus.

“It's actually made it much easier for us to have the occasional night out as well. If we want to go out for a dinner and leave Harper with a minder, we can just preset the pump. Or we can leave her with my dad because he's learnt how to use the pump, where he was always a bit nervous about the injections,” said Michelle.

“The freedom and choice it has given back is wonderful, and my husband and I now feel we are in control, not the diabetes.

It's been much better for her and much better for us, and for now it's the best thing around.”

To learn more about insulin pump therapy visit www.medtronic-diabetes.com.au.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, contact Kerryn Welsh on 02 8876 6162 or 0414 183 703

EDITORS NOTE: Pictures are available