

RISKY BEHAVIORS OF ADOLESCENTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES IN COMPARISON WITH THEIR HEALTHY PEERS

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Introduction: Adolescents with type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1D) may differ from their healthy peers with respect to the presence of risky behaviors.

Objective: To explore the frequency of risky behaviors among T1D adolescents in comparison with healthy peers and associated factors.

Population and methods: 58 T1D adolescents (29 boys/29 girls) with a mean±SD age of 16.3±2.0 years, a disease duration of 6.7±3.5 years and HbA1c:8.0±1.3% were compared to 116 healthy controls (matching 1:2 for school, class and gender). Anonymous, self-reported questionnaires were used to evaluate sexual and risk-taking behaviors.



Results: T1D adolescents had a sexual experience at a significantly lower percentage than healthy peers (74.1% vs 87.4%, p=0.033).

- The number of sexual partners was similar for both groups.
- Intoxication by alcohol prior to sexual contact was reported in far fewer cases in T1D adolescents (4.3% vs 20%, p=0.046).
- Risky behavior was observed less frequently among T1D adolescents than controls (8.6% vs 23.3% respectively).
- Less girls than boys in both T1D and control groups had risky behaviors (0% vs 18.5%, p=0.401).
- T1D adolescents with >2 risky behaviors were all boys, with an older age than the rest of the T1D group (17.8 vs 16.2 years, p<0.031), a younger age at 1st sexual intercourse (14.8 vs 16.3 years, p=0.031) and with higher maternal education (p=0.039).
- No difference in diabetes duration and glycaemic control between the groups with or without risky behaviors was observed.
- When comparing control adolescents according to the presence/absence of risky behaviors, the risky group was also older in age (16.5 vs 15.7 years, p=0.006) and included predominantly boys (44% vs 11.1%, p=0.022); however, no significant difference in terms of parental education or age at sexual debut between the two control groups was observed.

Conclusions: Risky behavior was observed less frequently among T1D adolescents than their healthy peers and less frequently among girls of both groups. Risky behavior in T1D group was associated with older age, male gender, younger age at sexual debut and higher maternal education, but not with diabetes duration and glycaemic control.

