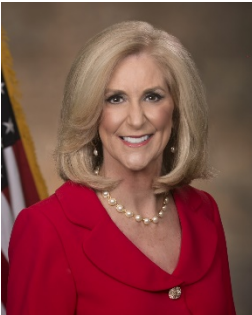


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Lynn Fitch: When your child has Type 1 diabetes

Lynn Fitch, Guest columnist

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The choice was made, and I was helpless.

My daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, and this ever-so-cruel and painful chronic disease had chosen my precious child. As a mother, my immediate reaction was to hold her and tell her that all would be fine and that I could give her some medicine and she would be all better shortly. However, the reality is that Type 1 diabetes never goes away, and that it takes daily supplies of insulin, needles, meter strips and an insulin pump to keep that beautiful daughter alive.

This is a life-or-death message when you hear your child has Type 1 diabetes. The only way to have continued life for my child and all those thousands of children diagnosed every day was to be reassured that those medical needs would be met. The very breath was taken out of me when that warning sank in. I had to come to grips that this disease was going to rob my child of a sense of a normal life. So the new norm becomes one of thousands of finger pricks, counting carbs, waking up on a schedule to check her blood sugar and to administer shots. And as another side effect of how this awful disease rips your family to pieces, my other children watched my daughter give herself shots daily — many times up to seven a day.

This ever-present disease never stops. Now my other children have to be checked often to make sure Type 1 is not invading their lives as well. This disease is not hereditary and yet can hit any child at any given age. The new norm means numerous trips to numerous doctors, hospital stays and, of course, countless trips to purchase the life thread supplies. Each and every one of those supplies is extremely costly, even if you have insurance. This disease strips families of financial stability because those dollars that might have been saved away must be spent to sustain that child's life. The Type 1 diabetes nightmare does not end at a certain age but engulfs that child's existence into adulthood because insulin dependency is forever.

After the initial watershed of tears, we all began to face the fear of this dreadful disease and how we would rise to take on Type 1 diabetes. The love of a parent for a child is powerful, and you will do anything and everything to make the life of your child as comfortable as possible taking on a chronic disease. Tears, smiles and pain still exist in my sweet child's life. My daughter is now a very strong young woman who meets this disease every day and stands up to the trauma her body is hit with every hour on the hour, but she does so with the ever-so-necessary insulin and other medical supplies.

Always the ultimate goal is research to end this devastating disease. As a board member of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation for many years, my entire family has been involved with enlightening others about the true story of Type 1 diabetes and the hope of the cure. As God leads us through these trials and tribulations, there is that true hope that one day there will be a cure for this disease and no other parent has to hear those words that their child has been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

This op-ed was written and published when Attorney General Lynn Fitch was Treasurer for the State of Mississippi.