

January 2005, Alice was 2 1/2. She started at the local nursery and she loved it - she was only doing three afternoons a week, but I loved the freedom, and she just adored the staff there.

After her first week, she came down with a cold. Absolutely nothing out of the ordinary, and quite frankly what you would expect after her first week at nursery - the cold lingered a while and then she developed little spots on her torso. She had commonly had rashes when she was little - in her first daycare nursery she was sent home on 6 occasions with suspected chickenpox. We thought nothing of this simple rash.

During the last week of Jan and first week of February, she became noticeably tired and lethargic. For a child that would run constantly, I was taking the buggy nearly everywhere, and on some occasions she would barely get out of it. The first weekend of Feb, we spent the weekend with friends (one of whom is a GP) in Bury St Edmunds walking around the grounds of Ickworth Park. Their toddler (the same age as Alice) was running from A to B. Alice refused to get out of her buggy. I don't actually remember the gradual changes, but by this point we were carrying a porta-potty under the buggy. She used it three times on the walk alone. She was constantly drinking and had learnt a new word - thirsty. To this day our friend cannot believe that she did not spot the signs - she considers that Alice's symptoms were textbook, but she didn't put her finger on it.

It was simple in some ways, the following Wednesday morning I lost my temper. I remember standing at the breakfast table saying 'I can't take you to the doctor and tell him you are thirsty - I need to know how much you drink each day'. I gave her a 2 litre bottle of water and a cup. The deal was simple, she could drink what she wanted but it had to come out of the bottle. She finished the whole bottle in 10 minutes and asked for more.

I rang the doctors and got an appointment for later that day. We thought perhaps she had a bladder or urine infection - surely that would explain the constant thirst and peeing? We took a urine sample in a film canister, Tony would take her to the doctors, and I would go shopping in Colchester.

I remember arriving back home from the shops - about 6pm - it was dark, and all the lights in the house were off - I remember running up the garden into the house - where the hell were they? On the table was a note. 'We have gone to West Suffolk Hospital. Alice has diabetes.'

It would appear that Tony took her to the GP's. The GP started to give him a lecture about parental control and badly behaved children getting away with all sorts of poor behaviour. As a parting comment the GP said - 'anyway, I wouldn't be able to do anything unless you had a urine sample'. Tony presented him with the sample he had brought along, the GP huffed and puffed a bit, and dip tested it. Apparently his whole demeanour changed instantly. They all sat back down, and he just said 'Your daughter has Diabetes. This is serious. She needs to get to hospital now, I will pull some strings, you must go straight there, and not go back home.'

Tony went back home, wrote me the note, and then drove straight to the hospital. Her first blood test was off the meter. She had lost 10% of her body weight in 2 weeks. We stayed at WSH for 6 days. We were very 'lucky'.