

It was May 2006. Peter had just celebrated his 5th birthday in April and was an energetic, lively boy who loved going to playgroup and was due to start school in August.

I remember saying to Andy that something wasn't right with Peter, but I didn't know what. All I could say was that he was drinking a lot, weeing a lot and was very lethargic (classic symptoms). Andy hadn't noticed really, but if Peter went out on the tractor with him after playgroup, he was only sitting on the passenger seat and not needing any energy anyway.

Over the course of about a week, as I remember, the drinking increased. Whereas I used to struggle to get him to drink before going to playgroup, he was now drinking at least four cups of juice or water before leaving the house. Then when he came home, he would sit and watch telly, only getting up to go to the toilet. Watching television is so not Peter, that this in itself was a sign there was something wrong. Also, after putting him to bed I could hear the patter of footsteps. When I went up to investigate, he had got out of bed, gone to the bathroom to drink some water. This happened several nights running. I am not aware of much weight loss, he is a scrawny individual anyway and we have always joked about being able to count his ribs. Then one night he came through to our room quite distressed, he had wet the bed. Not just a bit though, it was saturated. Pyjamas wet from head to toe, sheet, duvet, pillow - everything soaked. I just cried, because this confirmed my son was ill, but I didn't know why. I felt so helpless at the same time.

Andy and I discussed it together. I said that I knew excessive drinking was a sign of diabetes, because when I was in NCT, when Michael was a baby, a mother there who was a GP missed the signs of diabetes in her own daughter. Her story sprang to mind immediately. Andy said that if Peter was an animal (this is the farmer in him coming out), he would think it was kidney problems.

By the weekend I knew he was ill, but was reluctant to phone NHS 24 as there was no vomiting, no diarrhoea, no temperature. On Monday phoned into playgroup as he was too weak to go in. They asked what was wrong, I said I didn't know, but my instinct told me he was ill. That day was the annual display night for the Boys Brigade Company at which I am a leader, so in the afternoon I went down to the hall with Peter in tow, having delayed phoning GP as I was busy. All he kept doing was asking for more drinks. I was getting exasperated with him and saying he couldn't possibly need any more.

Tuesday morning I phoned the GP. I clearly remember going in and saying "You will probably think I am an over worried mother, but my son is ill and I don't know why." I went through the symptoms and his first question was "Is there diabetes in the family?" I said no. He asked for a urine sample there and then. Obviously Peter had been to the toilet while we were waiting and could not co-operate. The GP sent us home with a sample bottle to be returned as soon as possible. He

also said, that just in case the diabetes test came back negative, he would refer Peter on for further blood tests. Obviously, they were unnecessary.

I can now see how lucky we were to see that GP, who realised what was going on and didn't dismiss him offhand, "because diabetes in children is rare".

So, how do you get a sample from a boy who starts weeing in secret, or going outside to do it behind a tree? With great difficulty! Eventually, he agreed to give me a little bit, but he very carefully controlled how much he would let me have. Even though there was a great flood into the toilet afterwards.

Wednesday morning arrived. I took the sample into the surgery just before lunch. (11ish). Then at about 5pm the phone rang. It was the surgery to say they had found very high levels of sugar in Peter's sample and we had to get him into the hospital immediately. They suspected diabetes. They wouldn't give us a definite diagnosis at that point. I tried to phone Andy on his mobile, couldn't get an answer, so I phoned his parents. Apparently he had gone off to collect the new ride-on lawnmower, so wouldn't be back for a while. I waited for him, then we dropped Michael off at Granny's house and set off for the appointment that would change our lives forever.

When we arrived at the hospital, we had to find the toilet again. Good job there's one at the front door. We went straight to the Childrens Ward 29, where they were waiting for us and had a room ready for Peter. Luckily for us the consultant on duty that evening was actually a member of the paediatric diabetes team and knew exactly what he was talking about and could see exactly what was happening with Peter. He was actually quite annoyed with the surgery, at the length of time they took to phone us with the urine test results. He thought, given the time I handed the sample in, that we should have been on the ward soon after lunch.

They took blood tests and measured his BG level - he was 41mmol. Although at the time that meant nothing to me, he explained that it was a very high reading. They administered insulin. We were kept in for a few hours, but allowed home late at night once they could see his BG levels were coming down. He gave us a talk on diabetes, but I was in no fit state to take it in.

Went home and spent most of the night crying and had very little sleep. Then Thursday morning our Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurse arrived at the house. She came armed with heaps of medical equipment that we would need, plus a letter to the GP asking for a prescription as long as your arm. I still couldn't take in what was happening around us, to our little boy. She was brilliant and came out to the house everyday to start with to do his injections for us, until I agreed to do one. That took a lot of courage on my part to do that.

The first time I did his insulin injection still haunts me. The thought that I would have to do this every day just to keep him alive just filled me with fear, anger, sadness. A variety of emotions.

The insulin had obviously worked wonders on him, because when the nurse left he just wanted to get to playgroup and see his friends. We walked in towards the end of the session and he went round all his friends telling them at the top of his voice "I've got diabetes" and sounding very proud of it too!

I told the Playleader about everything and she said she hadn't noticed any change in him. When I asked her about the toilet, she told me that they are not allowed to accompany children to the toilet any more, it is an invasion of their privacy. (These are pre-school children for heavens sake). This came from the HMIE inspectors. So the children just go as and when they want and nobody had picked up on Peter's frequent visits.

We were very fortunate to encounter medical staff who were on the ball and took prompt action. We have moved on in the past two years and although we now accept Peter's condition, life has changed considerably. We are very grateful to the team at our hospital who have given us much support and are forward thinking enough to be offering insulin pump therapy to over 30 children in their care, including Peter. This has benefited us hugely in the short space of time we have had it and we appreciate how lucky we are to have it.