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## Illness Centrality and Well-Being Among Male and Female Early Adolescents with Diabetes

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## Abstract

**Objective** We examined the implications of illness centrality for psychological and physical health among male and female early adolescents with type 1 diabetes. **Methods** We interviewed 132 adolescents before or after a routine clinic appointment. We measured the extent to which they defined themselves in terms of their illness, their views of the illness, psychological well-being, self-care behavior, and metabolic control. **Results** Females scored higher on illness centrality than males. Illness centrality was related to poor psychological well-being when the illness was perceived in negative terms, but only for females. For males, illness centrality was unrelated to psychological well-being. Illness centrality was

related to poor metabolic control. **Conclusions** The extent to which adolescent females define themselves in terms of their illness is most problematic when the illness is perceived in highly negative terms. Future research should examine how illness centrality and views of illness change over the course of adolescence.

**Key words:** adolescents with diabetes; gender; health; self-concept.

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