Sweet Pee

Mrs Paula Sweet brings her 14 year old son, Peter, to see their GP, Dr Matt Dobson. She is concerned because he has lost some weight recently and looks a bit "scrawny". She's also noticed that he has been drinking a lot more than usual – and going to the loo all the time. Although Dr Dobson directs his questions to Peter, he is unforthcoming and Mrs Sweet answers for him.

She admits that Peter has been eating normally but complains that he seems to have lost interest in playing football, saying he doesn't have the energy. Dr Dobson measures Peter's height and weight and compares these to percentile charts, finding that he's average height for his age (50% percentile) but his weight is below average (25% percentile). Dr Dobson tests a sample of Peter's urine with a Clinistix strip and discovers that it contains glucose. Subsequent blood tests confirm that Peter has diabetes mellitus.

At a follow-up appointment, Dr Dobson explains to Peter that his pancreas is not working properly and, from now on, he will need to inject himself with insulin to help regulate his blood glucose. Peter reacts angrily and blurts out "No way! I am NOT going to inject myself". Dr Dobson reflected that it was sometimes challenging to treat teenagers. Legally, Peter was a child but Dr Dobson still needed to respect his autonomy, and include him in the decisions made about his health. Dr Dobson tries two approaches to persuade Peter to change his mind: exploring Peter's concerns about injecting insulin and explaining the long-term health risks associated with uncontrolled diabetes.

Peter is referred to the diabetes clinic where he is given information about his diet and how to monitor his blood glucose. He also joins a support group for teenage diabetics and is relieved to find he is not the only one. Despite this, Peter still finds it difficult to come to terms with the fact that he has a chronic condition with which he will need to live for the rest of his life.