

Sotomayor tells how she deals with diabetes

June 21 2011, By MARK SHERMAN , Associated Press



FILE - In this Jan. 31, 2011 file photo, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor speaks at the University of Chicago Law School in Chicago. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast, File)

(AP) -- Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor was seven years old and living in the South Bronx when she found she was thirsty all the time. Soon after, she started wetting her bed at night.

"I was ashamed," the 56-year-old justice said, as she related how she came to learn that she has diabetes. The audience for the unusually personal glimpse at a justice's life was children who are diabetics, like Sotomayor. And the reason she met with them Tuesday in a Washington ballroom was to assure them that their common affliction is no bar to

doing anything they want.

"It's a disease you have to deal with, but you can," she said, as she sat in an armchair with 150 children seated in a semicircle on the carpet in front of her.

Sotomayor said she has the job of her dreams and that coping with it has become second nature. She injects herself with insulin four to six times a day, including often before she takes the bench with her colleagues to hear arguments in Supreme Court cases.

Sotomayor's condition has long been known, but she has not previously spoken so openly about managing diabetes. The appearance was part of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's Children's Congress.

To one little girl who asked whether having [Type 1 diabetes](#) gets easier as an adult, Sotomayor replied, "Absolutely."

Advances in technology have made dealing with diabetes so much easier since she was diagnosed in the early 1960s, she said.

She held her hands about a foot apart to indicate, perhaps with a bit of exaggeration, how big the needle was that a lab technician used to draw blood. Whatever its size, Sotomayor said it was large enough that she ran from the hospital where she was being tested and hid under a car outside.

Instead of the pin pricks used today to check a diabetic's [blood sugar levels](#), Sotomayor recounted using the edge of a razor blade. "It was horrible," she said.

Without disposable needles for [insulin injections](#), Sotomayor had to sterilize a needle every morning, requiring her to climb on a chair to reach the stove. She would fill a pot with water and then wait for it to

boil. "It takes forever to get water to boil," she said, recalling how long it seemed to her as a child.

When another child asked her to say something positive about having [diabetes](#), Sotomayor said it taught her discipline, which has helped her as a student and beyond.

"Figuring out how I felt all the time," she said. "All of that taught me discipline."

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Citation: Sotomayor tells how she deals with diabetes (2011, June 21) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-06-sotomayor-diabetes.html>

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