

Feeling sick?

What to do

Information for people with Type 2 Diabetes



Diabetes and sick days

A minor illness can result in a major rise in blood glucose levels

Common illnesses such as tonsillitis, ear, chest or urinary tract infections, and viruses can place extra stress on your body. This stress may cause a rise in your blood sugar levels.

It can be difficult to predict how an illness will affect you so you need to test your blood sugar levels frequently. Sometimes you can feel terrible but blood sugar levels don't change much. At other times minor illnesses can put a lot of stress on the body and send blood glucose levels soaring. Other things that may contribute to high blood glucose include emotional stress and surgery.

It's important for you to understand how to manage high blood glucose levels when you are sick. To avoid problems follow the 6 steps in the 'What to Do' section of this guide.

Be prepared before you get sick

1. Discuss what to do when sick with your diabetes team.
Take the action plan on page 6 of this guide to your next appointment
2. Discuss sick day management with family and friends and the potential for needing extra help and support from them when you're sick
3. Prepare a sick day management kit (See page 7)
4. Try to stay healthy with diet and exercise and consider preventative actions such as a yearly flu injection.

What to Do - 6 Key Steps

1. Start following your sick day - action plan immediately if:

- you feel unwell or have any signs of illness even if your blood glucose is normal
- your blood glucose is greater than 15mmol/L for 8-12 hrs or more, **even if you are feeling OK.**

You may have reasons for implementing the guidelines earlier, such as how your body reacts to infections or how tightly controlled your blood glucose levels are. You should discuss this with your medical team.

2. Continue taking your diabetes medications or insulin dose

Even if you are eating little or are vomiting and have diarrhoea, you should continue your diabetes medications or insulin.

Metformin (which has a number of different brand names) is the only medication that may need to be **ceased if you are vomiting. You will need to discuss with your doctor whether or not to keep taking your metformin if you are vomiting.**

Your body usually needs extra insulin when you are unwell. If you are taking insulin you may need to increase the dose.

How much extra insulin

If extra insulin is needed the amount is based on blood glucose levels so these need to be monitored at least two-hourly.

Extra insulin should be rapid or fast acting insulin and be in addition to your usual insulin dose.

See table on page 5 for an indication of how to estimate extra insulin requirements.

3. Glucose levels - need frequent monitoring

Frequent checking of blood glucose levels is the only way to monitor the effect of illness on diabetes.

If your blood glucose levels are above 15 mmol/L (for more than 8 - 12 hrs or earlier if advised by you diabetes team) you should check blood glucose 2 hourly.

4. Ask for help

Managing your blood glucose levels when you are feeling unwell can be difficult especially if it is the first time.

Phone your doctor or diabetes team early so that they can help you manage the situation and assess the underlying illness. They would much prefer to talk to you over the phone than have to treat you in hospital.

If you are not feeling well enough to be constantly testing your glucose levels, try to organise for someone to stay with you to provide support.

5. Keep drinking and eat if possible

Try to have half to one cup of fluid (125-250 mls) every hour to avoid dehydration.

If you can eat that will help maintain your energy requirements and prevent low blood glucose levels.

If you feel too unwell to eat, you should try to drink:

- Sweetened fluids if your blood glucose is less than 15 mmol/L
- Sugar free fluids if your blood glucose is more than 15 mmol/L.

6. Get yourself to a hospital or medical clinic if:

- **Blood glucose** - is greater than 15mmol/L for more than 24 hrs or blood glucose continues to rise despite 2 extra insulin doses
- **You are feeling** drowsy, confused, having difficulty breathing or have severe abdominal pain
- **Vomiting** - is persistent especially if frequent for more than 2-4 hours
- **Hypoglycaemia** - is severe or blood glucose cannot be kept above 4mmol/L
- **Too unwell** - if you or support people are unable to carry out the monitoring required.

Women who are pregnant may need to be more cautious and seek medical advice with any signs of illness.

As a guide the amount of extra insulin needed is:

- a. If blood glucose is between 15-22 mmol/L 10% extra of total daily insulin dose.
- b. If blood glucose is greater than 22 mmol/L 20% extra of total daily insulin dose.

Example of how to calculate extra insulin dose:

1. Usual daily dose:	Morning	Dinner
Fast acting	4 units	6 units
Intermediate/Long acting	18 units	12 units
2. Total daily dose:	= 40 units	
3. 10% of daily dose:	= 4 units of fast acting insulin	

Sick day Action Plan

Date

Any special instruction for when to commence using guidelines.

Details of who to contact.

Action to take if unable to contact numbers above.

Any special instructions for diabetes medications.

Any special instructions for types of fluids to have.

Instructions for use of insulin.

Instructions for managing low blood glucose levels.

When to seek medical care.

Other.

Sick Day Management Kit

Every six months, check that your kit is fully-stocked with items that are within their expiry date.

- Copy of the sick day guidelines
- Telephone numbers to call for help e.g. support people, general practitioner, local hospital, and diabetes educator.
- Short acting or rapid acting insulin (if recommended by medical team)
- Insulin syringes or insulin pen (if insulin recommended by medical team)
- Food for sick days and fluids (including sweetened and diet drinks)
- Glucose containing food
- Pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Monitoring equipment

- In date blood testing strips
- Thermometer
- Spare record book/paper to record results of your monitoring.



For further copies of this sickday guide go to

www.adea.com.au

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