

Managing Sick Days with Diabetes in Adults

Illness can significantly affect diabetes

- ▶ When sick, your body reacts by releasing hormones to fight the infection
- ▶ These hormones raise blood sugar levels and make it more difficult for insulin to lower your blood sugar
- ▶ In diabetes, even a minor illness can lead to dangerously high blood sugar



What can happen with dangerously high blood sugar?

Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)

When your body does not have enough insulin, it starts breaking down fat, which produces acids called ketones

When too many ketones are produced too fast, it can cause an emergency condition known as DKA

DKA is a medical emergency. Test for ketones every 4-6 hours when sick. Contact your PCP immediately if you are positive for ketones

Hyperosmolar Hyperglycemic Syndrome (HHS)

Serious complication of type 2 diabetes

Triggered by illness or infection

Extremely high blood sugars without the presence of ketones

HHS is a medical emergency with risks of dehydration and confusion

Call your doctor if any of the following occur when sick

Unable to eat normally or keep food down for > 6 hours	Severe diarrhea	Weight loss \geq 5 lbs	Temperature $> 101^{\circ}\text{F}$	Blood sugar < 60 mg/dL or remains > 250 mg/dL on 2 checks	Moderate to large amounts of ketones in urine	Trouble breathing	Feeling unusually sleepy or can't think clearly
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Learn more at diabetes.org/diabetes/treatment-care/planning-sick-days

Handout created through a collaboration between the TMIN Pharmacists and Care Managers

Diet

- Try to eat normal types and amounts of food
- Drink 1 cup of sugar-free fluid every hour, such as water, herbal tea, broth
- Try to drink 9 cups of fluid daily
- If not able to eat normally, eat and drink light foods & fluids that contain 15g carbohydrate every hour (such as 1 slice toast or 7-8 saltine crackers)

Medications & Monitoring

- **Continue to take insulin and oral medications as instructed. Do NOT stop your medications unless directed by your doctor**
- Check your blood sugar at least every 2-4 hours
- Check for ketones every 4-6 hours using urine dip sticks or finger stick strips if your blood sugars are elevated

Low Blood Sugar Management

- Consume 15g carbohydrates if your blood sugar is < 70 mg/dL (such as 3-4 glucose tablets or 4 oz fruit juice or soda)
- Wait 15 minutes then test your blood sugar
- If your blood sugar remains < 70 mg/dL, consume another 15g carbohydrates and test again in 15 minutes
- Repeat until your blood sugar is > 70 mg/dL

Tip: for over-the-counter products, always read the label and consult a healthcare professional. Look for sugar-free formulations such as Diabetic Tussin and sugar-free lozenges. Use caution with decongestants like pseudoephedrine.

To prepare for sick days in the future, set aside a Sick Day Kit with necessary supplies:

- Thermometer
- Phone numbers
- Non-perishable foods
- Sugar-free cough drops
- Recommended flu or cold medicines
- Extra supply of medications/insulin

- Facial tissues
- Glucometer and extra blood sugar testing supplies
- Extra batteries
- Ketone finger stick strips or urine dip sticks
- Glucose tabs or gels

Get all recommended vaccines!

THE DANGERS OF INFLUENZA (FLU): WHY PEOPLE WITH DIABETES NEED TO GET VACCINATED

34+
million adults
have **diabetes**,
and are 3X more likely
to die from flu-related
complications



SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- **3X** higher risk of death and 6X increased risk of hospitalization
- Worsening of diabetes (poor glycemic control and acidosis)
- Increased risk of renal and cardiovascular disease issues
- Permanent physical decline/loss of independence

Influenza

Hepatitis B

Tetanus

Pneumonia

Shingles

COVID-19

COVID-19 can worsen your blood sugars

You may also experience higher blood sugars for ~ 7 days after the vaccine

Diabetes can increase your chance of getting seriously ill from COVID-19

Getting vaccinated is the best step to prevent serious disease!