

Managing Diabetes During Illness

The stress of being ill causes your blood glucose to rise. During an illness, even if you are not eating and exercising as usual, your blood glucose may rise. The goal of sick day management is to prevent a minor illness from developing into a major illness.

What to do when you are sick

- Continue to take your usual daily dose of diabetes medication. An exception to this rule is Glucophage® (metformin). If you are unable to eat and drink, you may become dehydrated. You should not take Glucophage® if you are dehydrated.
- Monitor blood glucose values every two to four hours.
- Monitor your urine or blood for ketones if you have type 1 diabetes.
- Drink more sugar-free, caffeine-free fluids.
- Rest.
- Involve a family member or friend in your sick day plan. Be sure there is someone available to check on you and to help you with your diabetes treatment plan.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any non-prescription medication.

Call your health care team if you are:

- Vomiting more than once every four to six hours.
- Unable to eat or drink.
- Having positive ketones.
- Feeling ill with a fever lasting more than 24 hours.
- Having diarrhea that does not go away for more than six hours.

Be prepared to tell your doctor:

- How you feel (symptoms).
- How long you have been sick.
- Your blood glucose.
- Your ketone results.
- What you have been eating and drinking.
- Your temperature.
- The name and dosage of all medications you have taken.

S I C K D A Y M E A L P L A N

- If your blood glucose is greater than 240 mg/dl, drink 1 cup (8 oz.) of sugar-free fluids like water, tea, broth and diet soda every one to two hours.
- If your blood glucose is less than 240 mg/dl, drink fluids with 10-15 grams of carbohydrate every one to two hours.
- Replace missed meals or snacks with 50 grams of carbohydrate or follow a sick day meal plan designed for you.
- Some liquids and semi-liquids to try:

10 g of carbohydrate each

- 1/2 cup (4 oz. or 1/3 can) regular soda (7-up®, Sprite®, and ginger ale are good choices)
- 1/3 cup unsweetened fruit drink
- 1/3 apple or pineapple juice
- 1/4 cup (2 oz.) grape or cranberry juice
- 3/4 cup (6 oz.) milk (skim or 2%)
- 1/4 cup regular gelatin
- 1/4 cup regular custard
- 1/2 twin Popsicle®

15 g of carbohydrate each

- 1/2 cup ice cream
- 1/4 cup sherbet
- 1 cup (8 oz.) cream soup
- 1 cup (8 oz.) milkshake
- 1/4 cup regular pudding
- 1/2 cup unsweetened orange or grapefruit juice
- 1 cup (8 oz.) Gatorade®
- 1 slice dry toast
- 6 saltines

Sick day kit - be prepared for an illness by having a sick day kit. The kit might include the following items:

- Extra blood glucose strips (do not use strips if past the expiration date)
- Urine ketone strips or blood ketone strips (if you have type 1 diabetes)
- Thermometer
- Doctor's phone number
- Instructions from the doctor related to extra insulin coverage

You should be aware that some medications can have an effect on diabetes control. It is important to always keep your diabetes health care team informed of any new medications you are using. This includes prescription and nonprescription drugs.

Follow these guidelines for choosing nonprescription drugs

- Read all labels carefully.
- Check all warnings and cautions.
- Avoid products containing sugar. Select sugar-free products.
- Suspect any word that ends in “-ose” (dextrose, fructose, lactose), sorbitol, mannitol and honey. These are all types of sugar and contain calories.
- Select products with little or no alcohol.
- Avoid aspirin in large doses. Large doses may lower blood glucose.
- Oral decongestants raise blood glucose and should be taken only with your doctor’s consent.
- Ask your pharmacist for help in choosing medications.

Over-the-Counter Medications**Choosing an over-the-counter medication**

See the chart below for examples of over-the-counter medications that have minimal to no effect on blood glucose control. Before using any over-the-counter medications, you will want to discuss this list with your doctor to determine the best choice for you!

O V E R - T H E - C O U N T E R M E D I C A T I O N		
Cough medications	Antidiarrheals	Fever reducers/ Pain relievers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cepacol® tablets sugar-free • Ceroxe® DM Expectorant • Colrex® Expectorant • Hytus® Tablets • Robitussin® – sugar-free • Sorbutuss® syrup • Supercitin® • Toclonol® expectorant • Tolu-sed® • Tolu-sed® DM • Tussar®-SF • Tuss-Ornade® DM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrective® Mixture • Kaopectate® • Lomotil® Liquid • Parepectolin® • Pepto-Bismol® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Panadol® • St. Joseph® Aspirin-Free Infant Drops • Tylenol® or Tylenol® Drops • Datril® • Acetaminophen

The Wise Health Care User

Taking good care of yourself, using the diabetes self-care skills you learn, and seeking preventive health care should help you avoid getting sick. When you do need to see the doctor or any other member of your health care team, it is important to be prepared.

You can prepare for meeting with your health care team by:

- Having a list of questions you want to ask.
- Sharing concerns and symptoms.
- Being honest.
- Reviewing all medications you use, including over-the-counter drugs.

Don't Forget:

- When you are sick, always take your insulin or diabetes pill.
- Blood glucose values go higher when you are sick.
- Testing blood glucose (and ketones, if you have type 1 diabetes) more often is necessary during an illness.
- Keep in touch with your health care team.
- Be alert to the effects of over-the-counter drugs on your blood glucose.