



## managing sick days

### Managing Diabetes During Illness

#### **I've heard that if I'm sick it can make my blood glucose higher.**

Sickness can make you feel miserable and when you have diabetes it can become harder to keep your blood glucose in control. Being sick can mean having a cold or flu, having an infection, feeling nauseated, vomiting, having diarrhea or running a fever. These put an added stress on your body and to deal with this stress, your body releases hormones to help fight the illness. These hormones also cause an increase in your blood glucose. Having an operation can also be stressful on your body and often causes higher blood glucose levels after surgery. This can happen even if your blood glucose levels are usually in control. Illness with uncontrolled blood glucose levels can put you at risk for serious complications that can lead to coma and death. Keeping blood glucose levels as close to your target range as possible during your illness will decrease the risk of these serious complications. Knowing what to do when you are sick and having a plan in place will help to alleviate some of your worry. Talk to your health care provider about a "sick plan" that will meet your needs.

#### **What should I do when I'm sick?**

Paying special attention to your body is very important when you are ill.

- Check your blood glucose every 3-4 hours
- Test your urine for ketones if you have been advised to do so by your health care team
- Take your diabetes medicines or insulin as directed. Your need for insulin increases during times of stress, such as illness.
- Eat your usual amount of carbohydrates if you are able. You may want to try the milder foods such as regular jello (not sugar-free),

applesauce, soups and crackers, toast, hot cereals or sugar-free pudding.

- If you are not able to stick to your usual meal plan due to illness, try to take in at least 15 grams of carbohydrate every hour. Aim for about 45 - 60 grams of carbohydrate every 3 - 4 hours
- If you have diarrhea or are vomiting, it is especially important to prevent dehydration, as this can lead to serious consequences. Drink a cup of fluid every hour. Choose water or other non-carbohydrate beverages if you are still able to eat carbohydrate containing foods. Choose carbohydrate containing fluids, such as regular ginger ale, juices, milk, juice bars or popsicles if you are unable to tolerate food intake.
- Don't take over-the-counter medicines before you have checked with your health care provider.

#### **Call your health care provider if:**

1. You have been sick or had a fever and you're not getting better in a day
2. Your urine has moderate to large amounts of ketones
3. Your blood glucose is over 240 mg/dl
4. You have vomiting or diarrhea for more than 6 hours
5. You have unusual symptoms such as stomach pain or difficulty breathing
6. You can't get your blood glucose in control
7. You're just not sure what to do

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The key is to plan ahead for sick days and review your sick day plan with your health care provider on a regular basis.

### Planning ahead includes:

- Have enough supplies on hand for checking your blood glucose and ketones, if necessary. Be sure your supplies are not outdated.
- Have enough of the right kinds of foods and fluids available
- Have a plan for taking and adjusting your medications
- Know when your health care provider wants to be called
- Have emergency numbers readily available
- Make family and friends aware of your plan

### Foods That Contain 15 Grams of Carbohydrates Per Serving

1/2 cup of regular jello	1 cup of milk
1/2 cup of regular soda	1/2 cup of applesauce
1/2 cup of hot cereal	1 cup of soup
5-6 saltine crackers	1/2 cup of fruit juice
1 slice of dry toast	1 double stick popsicle
1/2 cup of mashed potatoes	1/2 cup of regular ice cream
4 life savers	1 cup of Gatorade

### TIPS

- *Get your yearly flu vaccine. It is safe and can help prevent many cases of flu. During flu season, people with diabetes who don't get a flu shot need to be hospitalized 5 times more often than those who do get the flu vaccine.*
- *Get a pneumonia shot at least once. If you are over 64 years of age and had your shot more than 5 years ago you should get a booster shot. This shot helps prevent pneumonia that is caused by certain kinds of bacteria.*



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