

sick days & type 1 diabetes

Everyday illnesses or infection will nearly always cause a rise in blood glucose levels whether you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Therefore, at the earliest sign of any form of illness such as a cold or virus, it is important for you to take action.

What do I do when unwell?

There are five important steps for you to take:

1. Always take your insulin

When unwell, you must continue to take your insulin. If advised to reduce or stop your insulin, seek a second opinion from your diabetes specialist, diabetes educator or your hospital emergency department. Only in rare cases is the insulin dose reduced during illness, in fact you often need more insulin, not less.

2. Test your blood glucose levels – every 2 hours at first

If your blood glucose level is more than 15mmol/L often and you have ketones, you need extra insulin.

3. Test for ketones

Test for ketones regularly, using either ketone urine test strips (available from your pharmacy or through the National Diabetes Services Scheme) or a meter which allows blood ketones to be checked (such as Optium® or similar).

4. Rest

If possible have a friend or relative either stay with you or check on you frequently.

5. Keep drinking and (if possible) eating

Eat or drink carbohydrate-containing foods/fluids if your blood glucose levels are under 15 mmol/L. Eat non-carbohydrate containing foods if 15mmol/L or above.

See page 3 for Guidelines for Carbohydrate/Fluid Replacements.

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When unwell, do not stop taking your insulin! Test your blood glucose levels often, check for ketones, keep drinking and, if possible, eating – and rest. Be aware that there may be times when you will need to contact your doctor or diabetes educator.



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When do I need to call my doctor?

There are certain times during illness when your diabetes health professional will need to increase your insulin dose. Contact your doctor or diabetes educator if:

- Urine ketones are moderate/heavy and blood glucose over 15mmol/L.
- Blood ketones are more than 0.6 mmol/L and blood glucose over 15 mmol/L.

When to contact your doctor IMMEDIATELY!

- > If you can't keep food or fluids down and have persistent vomiting, diarrhoea and/or abdominal pain.
- > If you have deep rapid breathing or breathlessness.
- > If you are extremely drowsy.
- > If you have a 'fruity' odour to your breath.
(See ketoacidosis below).

What are ketones?

When there's not enough insulin in the body, glucose can't enter cells to provide energy. The body then begins to break down fat as a source of energy.

This process causes ketones to be produced. Ketones also need insulin to enter the cells and when there is not enough insulin, they build up in the blood and are eventually passed through the kidneys and into the urine.

While large quantities of ketones can be serious, small amounts of ketones are not harmful and can also be found in people who do not have diabetes.

What is ketoacidosis?

Ketoacidosis is a life-threatening condition that can occur when you are ill or have a very high blood glucose level resulting from a lack of insulin. The presence of large amounts of ketones in the blood or urine indicates ketoacidosis.

Signs of ketoacidosis can include:

- Nausea, vomiting and/or abdominal pain.
- Deep rapid breathing or breathlessness.
- Extreme drowsiness.
- A 'fruity' odour to the breath.

Guidelines for carbohydrate/fluid replacements

It is very important to keep up your carbohydrate and fluids when you are ill.

If you can eat normally

- If you are able to eat normally, do so and sip extra fluids each hour, about 1/2 –3/4 cup, a little less for children. To prevent dehydration, drink unsweetened fluids such as water, diet soft drinks, cordial, weak tea, coffee, vegetable juice or broth.

If you can't eat normally

- Have some easy to manage carbohydrate drinks, snacks or small meals. If you are unable to eat, drink carbohydrate-containing fluids if your blood glucose levels are under 15mmol/L. See the list below for ideas. To prevent dehydration, drink unsweetened fluids such as water, diet soft drinks, cordial, weak tea, coffee, vegetable juice or broth, about 1/2–1 cup each hour.
- Remember, if you can't keep food or fluids down and have persistent vomiting or diarrhoea, get medical advice immediately.

Keep up your carbohydrates and fluids

- It is very important to keep up your carbohydrates and fluids, even when you are ill. Here are some ideas to provide 15 grams of carbohydrate per hour if your blood glucose levels are under 15mmol/L.

Drinks providing approximately 15 grams of carbohydrate	
Milk	1 cup (250ml)
Milk + flavouring	3/4 cup milk + 1 tablespoon of Milo [®] , Actavite [®] or Quik [®]
Fruit juice*	3/4 cup
Tea or coffee	Add 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey
Hot lemon juice	Add 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey
Herbal tea	Add 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey
Gastrolyte	4 sachets
Ordinary soft drink* or cordial* (not diet)	3/4 cup
Sports drink (eg: Gatorade [®])	1 cup

continued over...

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Snacks providing approximately 15 grams of carbohydrate	
Crackers or crispbread	3 Sao®/ Ryvita® etc
Dry toast	1 slice
Plain sweet biscuits	3 Milk Arrowroot/Morning Coffee etc
Mashed potato	1/2 cup
Rice	1/3 cup
Breakfast cereals	1/2 cup Special K®, 2 Weetbix®
Porridge (made with water)	1/3 cup
Ordinary jelly or custard	1/2 cup
Ice cream	3 scoops
Ice blocks	1 1/2 sticks

* Care should be taken with sweetened or hypertonic fluids if diarrhoea occurs. Sweetened fluids may need to be diluted up to 1:5 for optimal absorption.



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For more information phone **1300 136 588** or visit your State/Territory Organisation's website:

ACT	www.diabetes-act.com.au	NSW	www.diabetesnsw.com.au
NT	www.healthylivingnt.org.au	QLD	www.diabetesqld.org.au
SA	www.diabetessa.com.au	TAS	www.diabetestas.com.au
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- > Diabetes Australia – NSW
- > Diabetes Australia – Queensland
- > Diabetes ACT
- > Diabetes SA
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