

Managing Diabetes When You're Sick

We all do our best to stay healthy and be prepared if we get sick. When you have diabetes, it's even more important to know what to do if you get sick. When you don't feel well, the stress of being sick can cause your blood sugar (blood glucose) to rise even if you're eating and exercising as usual. Have a sick-day plan that includes your physician's phone number and details on how your medications and meals may need to change. You should also include information on how often to check your blood glucose, when to check ketones, and when to call your doctor.

The goal of sick-day management is to prevent a minor illness from turning into a major issue.

A sick-day plan for when you're sick:

- Continue to take your diabetes medication. Don't stop your insulin or change doses that your doctor prescribed without talking to your doctor first.
- Test your blood sugar level every two to four hours and keep track of the results.
- Call your doctor if your blood sugar level is high (240 mg/dl or more) for more than six hours.
- Monitor your urine ketones using ketone urine strips that detect developing diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). This is especially useful if you have type 1 diabetes. When your body doesn't have enough insulin, it starts breaking down the fat as fuel, which produces ketones. When too many ketones are produced too quickly, they can cause DKA, which is very serious and can cause a coma or even death. If you think you have DKA, use an over-the-counter kit to test your urine. If you have moderate to high ketone levels in your urine, **call your doctor right away.**
- Stay hydrated. Drink 8 ounces of water or sugar-free and caffeine-free liquids. If unavailable, take frequent sips of liquid or have a sugar-free popsicle or a serving of sugar-free gelatin.
- Try to follow a regular meal plan. If you're unable to eat, substitute regular carbohydrate intake with liquids such as regular soda, gelatin, popsicles, Gatorade or Pedialyte, sherbet, or soup.
- Rest.
- Check your temperature for fever.
- Involve a family member or friend in your sick-day plan. Be sure there's someone available to check on you and help you if needed.
- Don't take any over-the-counter medicines without talking with your doctor. Many nonprescription medicines affect your blood sugar level.



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When to call your doctor or go to an emergency room if you're unable to get in touch with your doctor:

- You have trouble breathing, severe pain in your stomach, or chest pain.
- You have moderate to high ketone levels in your urine.
- You're vomiting and/or have had diarrhea for more than six hours.
- You lose 5 pounds or more during the illness.
- Your blood sugar is lower than 60 mg/dl or stays above 240 mg/dl.
- You feel too sick to eat normally and are unable to keep down food for more than 24 hours.
- Your temperature is over 101°F for 24 hours.
- You feel sleepy or can't think clearly. Have someone call your doctor or take you to the emergency room.

My doctor's phone number: _____

Physician's exchange or answering service: _____

Nearest urgent care center: _____

Nearest emergency room: _____