

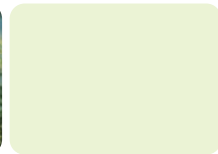


An educational service brought to you by the NHG Diabetes Workgroup

A Patient Education Guide to Care of Diabetes on Special Occasions



Adding years of healthy life



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NHG Diabetes Workgroup





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Sick Days

When you are sick (flu, coughs and colds) your blood glucose levels usually rise, even if you are not eating. Thirst, tiredness and frequent urination may occur.

You should seek medical advice if:

- You are vomiting and not able to take in foods, liquids or your diabetes tablets.
- Your illness lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Ketones are present in your urine.
- Your blood glucose levels are higher than 15mmol/L for more than one day.
- You are drowsy or confused (inform your family members or caregiver that they should bring you to the doctor when this happens).

Sick Day Rules

- Always take your insulin or diabetes tablets even when you are sick.
- Drink plenty of plain water.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Check your temperature.
- Test your blood glucose every 2 – 4 hours.
- Test your urine for ketones if you have type 1 diabetes or if your blood glucose levels are greater than 15mmol/L.
- If your blood glucose level is persistently above 15mmol/L, or if you detect ketones in your urine, you should seek medical help immediately.
- Follow your meal plan if you can eat. If you cannot eat regular meals, try to drink sweetened drinks or juices so that you get the required calories.



Fasting

A person with diabetes can fast but he must first understand how fasting changes his body needs and how he can adjust to these changes by following guidelines recommended by his doctor.

Generally:

- During fasting, your blood glucose level tends to fall.
- When breaking fast, there is a tendency to over-eat. This will increase the blood glucose level too much.
- Overall, the blood glucose level tends to fluctuate more.

Hence, seeking advice from your doctor or diabetes care team before fasting is important to prevent acute complications of uncontrolled blood glucose levels. Generally, they will advise you on:

- Your meal plan and activity level.
- How much and when to take your diabetes tablets.
- How much, what type and when to inject your insulin.
- How often to monitor your blood glucose.

Tips on Fasting

Diet

- Follow the meal plan that is recommended by your dietitian.
- Avoid overeating during the non-fasting period.



Physical Activity

It is necessary to continue your usual physical activity especially during the non-fasting period.

- Do light to moderate exercise daily to prevent weight gain.
- Do not over-exercise as it may lead to hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose).
- Test your blood glucose before you exercise.
- Carry some sweets or snacks with you. If hypoglycaemia happens, you must break fast and take a sweet or drink followed by something more substantial e.g. bread or biscuits.



Tablets

Your doctor will advise you on the changes you need to make in the dosage of your tablets, to decrease your risk of hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia.

Insulin

Consult your doctor first before you start fasting. Adjusting your insulin regimen is necessary for good blood glucose control. Your doctor will advise you on the type, dosage and timing of the insulin injections to be changed.

Blood Glucose Monitoring

You should check your blood glucose just before the sunset meal and 2 hours after the meal. You should also check just before the pre-dawn meal if you are on insulin.





Caution

You should not fast if you:

- Have poorly controlled type 1 or type 2 diabetes.
- Had not been following advice on diet, medication and daily activities.
- Have a history of diabetic ketoacidosis.
- Have serious complications such as nerve disorders, heart problems or uncontrolled hypertension.
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Managing at Home

- Monitor your blood glucose regularly.
- Check for urine ketones.
- Inform your diabetes care team if there is significant weight reduction due to dehydration or decreased food intake.

Diabetic Emergencies During Fasting

You must be aware of the warning signs and symptoms of complications such as hypoglycaemia, hyperglycaemia and dehydration. Signs and symptoms of dehydration include:

- Thirst.
- Dry and rough skin.
- Dry mucous membranes.
- Weak and irregular heartbeat.
- Low blood pressure.
- Lack of energy.
- General weakness.
- Rapid and shallow breathing.



If you experience any of these symptoms, call your doctor or go to the hospital to seek medical help quickly. Do not wait until the next day.

Travel

People with diabetes can travel. You can enjoy your holidays as much as anyone else can, but you should go prepared. It is necessary for you to plan and prepare for a safe and relaxed trip.



Preparing for the Trip

Medical Checkup

- Consult your doctor at least one month before travelling. You must have your diabetes well under control.
- Ask your doctor to prescribe medication for minor illnesses such as diarrhoea, flu etc for you to carry with you.
- Get a letter from your doctor stating that you have diabetes and describing your current treatment. It will explain to Customs why you are carrying insulin, syringes, tablets, blood glucose meter and so on.

Vaccination

- Get your vaccinations done weeks before your departure time to avoid reactions that might disturb your blood glucose balance while away from home.

Identification

- Always wear or carry some form of diabetes identification with you. A sudden attack of severe hypoglycaemia will affect your speech and thinking, and an identification card or bracelet will enable others to help you.

Spare supplies

- Carry extra supplies of insulin, syringes, medications, blood glucose test strips, in case you are away longer than you plan to be.

Travelling with insulin

- If you are on insulin injection and you need to cross time zones, your insulin dosing and timing may need to be adjusted. It is best to seek medical advice and discuss your travel plans and itinerary with your doctor.



While Travelling

Travelling by air

- Notify the airline in advance of a special order for your meals.
- Do not keep your insulin in your luggage as the insulin may freeze. Carry all medications, insulin and supplies with you on the plane in your hand luggage so that you can have access to them all the time.
- When drawing out insulin from the vial, it is necessary to put only half the amount of air into the vial because of the lower air pressure in the plane.
- Carry extra food such as glucose tablets, biscuits, dried fruits with you in case meals are delayed.
- Drink liquids regularly, but avoid sweet drinks and alcoholic beverages during the flight.
- Try to walk as often as is practical to improve blood circulation.

Travelling by car/bus/train

- Stop for short breaks and take time out for a short walk.
- Have snacks and meals on time.
- Carry extra food and drinks in the car, or in your hand luggage on a train or bus, in case of delays on the road or missed meals.
- If you are driving and develop a hypoglycaemia, stop the car and treat the hypoglycaemia straight away. Do not start driving until you are fully recovered.
- Do not leave your insulin on the dashboard in a hot car.



At Your Destination

- Store your insulin in a cool place as soon as possible.
- It would be useful to know where the nearest medical centres or pharmacies are.
- If you are planning of walking (a lot), wear a thin pair of socks and use a pair of shoes that is well broken in and comfortable.
- Check your feet daily. If you get blisters from walking, dress the blister and do not break it.
- Do not walk barefoot on a hot beach.
- Check your blood glucose level frequently as your activity and eating patterns may change drastically during your trip.
- You may need to read just your diabetes management plan including food, activity and medications.
- You should inform your travelling companion about your condition. Make sure he/she knows how to recognise and treat hypoglycaemia should it happen to you.
- If you are ill during the trip, remember your rules for sick day management.

For more information

Please contact:

Doctor's Name

Tel

Nurse's Name

Tel

Case/Care Manager's Name

Tel

DISCLAIMER

This booklet is produced for educational purposes only. Because each person's medical condition is unique, you should not rely on the information contained in this booklet as a substitute for personal medical attention, diagnosis or treatment. If you are concerned about your health, please consult your family physician or healthcare professional immediately.

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