

## Diabetes: How to Create a Sick-Day Plan



If you have diabetes, many other illnesses or stresses on your body can make your blood sugar go up. This can be dangerous. When you are sick with the flu or another illness, your body releases hormones to fight infection. These hormones raise blood sugar levels and make it hard for insulin or other medicines to lower your blood sugar.

Work with your doctor to write up a sick-day plan for what to do on days when you are sick. Learn what your blood sugar should be and how you should adjust your insulin or pills if you need to. Call your doctor if you have trouble checking your blood sugar or checking your urine for ketones.

Keep your plan in a handy place, and include contact numbers in case you need to reach your doctor at night or on the weekends. Let your family know where you keep the plan.

### What should you do if you get sick?

#### Take diabetes medicines as usual

- If you cannot eat or drink, or are having trouble eating or drinking, talk to your doctor.
- Your blood sugar may go up because of your illness. If you are vomiting and cannot take your medicine, call your doctor. You may need to adjust your insulin dose.
- Write down the diabetes medicines you have been taking and whether you have changed the dose based on your sick-day plan. You can give this information to your doctor if you need to call.

#### Eat and drink

- Eat your normal types and amounts of food. Drink extra fluids, such as water, broth, and fruit juice, to prevent dehydration.
  - If your blood sugar level is higher than 240, drink extra liquids that do not contain sugar, such as water or sugar-free cola.
  - If you cannot eat your usual foods, drink extra liquids, such as soup, sports drinks, or milk. You may also eat food that is gentle on your stomach, such as bananas, rice, crackers, gelatin, or applesauce. Try to eat or drink 50 grams of carbohydrate every 3 to 4 hours. For example, 6 saltine crackers, 1 cup (8 ounces) of milk, and ½ cup (4 ounces) of orange juice each have about 15 grams of carbohydrate.

#### Check blood sugar

- Check your blood sugar every 3 to 4 hours. Check it more often, even through the night, if it goes up fast. If your blood sugar rises above 300, take insulin if your doctor told you to do so. If you and your doctor did not

have a sick-day plan for taking extra insulin, call him or her for advice.

### **Ketone testing**

- If you are taking insulin, do a urine test for ketones every 4 to 6 hours, especially if your blood sugar is higher than 300.

### **Medicines without a prescription**

- Do not take any nonprescription medicines, such as pain relievers, decongestants, or herbal products or other natural medicines, without talking with your doctor first.

### **When to call a doctor**

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe belly pain.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have a feeling of pressure in your chest.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your blood sugar is higher than 240 after you have taken the amount of insulin in your sick-day plan.
- You take oral diabetes medicine and your blood sugar is higher than 240 before meals and stays high for more than 24 hours.
- You are not able to take your diabetes medicines because of vomiting and your blood sugar is higher than 240.
- Your blood sugar level drops below 70, and you have symptoms of low blood sugar that do not go away after eating food that contains sugar.
- You have more than 2+ or moderate ketones in your urine.
- You are sick with a fever and are not feeling better after a few days.
- You vomit or have diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You are breathing fast.
- Your breath smells fruity.
- Your mouth is dry.
- Your urine is a very dark color.
- You think you are having a problem with your medicine.