

Sick Day Rules for Adults with Diabetes who use insulin (1 of 2)

Feeling unwell?

If you go down with a cold, flu or any other illness, here are a few simple rules you should always remember that may help you with those "Sick day blues".

Never stop taking your insulin even if you do not feel well and cannot eat.

Your body needs insulin in order to transform the glucose supplied by the food you eat into the energy source your body's cells need. However, even if you don't eat, your body will produce glucose from its stores. If you stop your insulin you may then become ill, even seriously ill. Your dose however might need to be adjusted while you are sick. If you are unsure of how to do this, consult your healthcare professional.

Measure your blood glucose level more frequently, at least 4 times a day, and adjust your insulin dose if necessary

Your blood sugar will usually rise during illness especially with fever, so be prepared to increase your insulin dose as needed. Once you get better your insulin sensitivity will come back. You will then need to decrease your dose as soon as you see blood glucose values coming back into the normal range. Please speak to your health care professional if you are unsure about this.

Try to drink plenty of liquids such as water or sugar-free drinks. At least 3 to 4 litres should be sipped through the day if possible

Hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose) occurs more frequently during illness causing you to pass more urine, so that you can easily become dehydrated. Illness is also often associated with fever which accelerates fluid loss.

If you don't feel like eating solid food, try alternatives like milk, soup, cereals, ice cream, pudding, fruit juice or fizzy drinks.

This will help to ensure that you are still taking your full carbohydrate allowance, balancing the insulin and helping to prevent the problem of vomiting which can sometimes occur if a full meal is eaten.

Try to keep an emergency store of these alternatives for use only when you are feeling ill:

If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Patient Information Co-ordinator on 01722 336262 ext. 4401 or 07765 243494
fax: 01722 425037
email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk

We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Adapted from:
BD Consumer Healthcare "Sick Day Rules" by Diabetes Team, Salisbury District Hospital

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Sick Day Rules for Adults with Diabetes (2 of 2)

- natural fruit juice
- drinking chocolate
- milk
- thickened soup
- diet fruit or plain yoghurt
- ice cream
- Lucozade
- cola, lemonade or similar fizzy drink

Test your urine for ketones and glucose frequently as it will give you the first warning of either a lack of insulin or carbohydrates

The presence of both sugar and ketones indicates a lack of insulin. If you have only ketones you may not be getting enough food, specifically carbohydrates.

Call for help if:

- You are unsure about what to do
- You are vomiting
- You don't improve quickly
- Your blood glucose level remains high or, adversely low
- You are worrying

Even though illness is not something you can plan in advance, try to be prepared and ask your doctor, practice nurse or diabetes nurse about what to do if you become ill.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, NEVER STOP TAKING YOUR INSULIN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

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