

Diabetes

Sick Days with Diabetes

Sick days can make blood sugars hard to control. Here are some things you can do to speed up your recovery.

Ahead of Time

Ask your medical team about handling sick days before you get ill. Also train one or two family members or friends in blood glucose monitoring and other ways to help when you are sick. Keep a box filled with medicines and easy-to-fix foods. If you wait until you are sick, you may not have the energy to collect all the things you need.

Good choices are:

- Milk of magnesia
- A pain reliever
- Medicine to control diarrhea
- A thermometer
- Antacids
- Suppositories for vomiting
- If you cannot eat meals, you will need about 50 grams of carbohydrate every 4 hours.

Foods you may want to keep on hand are:

- Sports drinks
- Instant cooked cereals
- Small juice containers
- Crackers
- Canned soup
- Instant pudding
- Regular gelatin

- Canned applesauce
- Regular soft drinks

You can add other, more perishable, foods like toast, yogurt, ice cream, or milk when you are sick.

While You Are Sick

Even if you cannot eat normally, you will need to take your diabetes medicine. In fact, you may need to increase or change your medicine because your blood sugar may go higher. While you are sick, your medical team may ask you to test your blood sugar more often. Keep good written records about your blood sugar levels, medicines, temperature, and weight. You may need to test your urine for ketones if your blood sugar goes very high.

Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Keep a pitcher of water or other non-caloric drink by your bed, so that you can drink 4 to 6 ounces every half hour. You may also need to drink beverages with sugar if you cannot get 50 grams of carbohydrate through other food choices. The portions of these sweet beverages must be controlled, as you don't want your blood sugar to get too high.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your health care provider if any of the following occurs:

- You have moderate to high ketone levels in your urine.
- You have not eaten normally for more than 24 hours.
- You have a fever over 101 degrees for 24 hours.
- You can't keep any liquids down for more than 4 hours.
- You have vomiting and/or diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You lose 5 pounds or more during the illness.
- Your blood glucose reading is under 60 mg/dL or over 300 mg/dL.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You can't stay awake or think clearly.

If you cannot think clearly or feel too sleepy, have someone else call your health care provider or take you to the emergency room.

Questions to Ask

1. Do I have a written plan from my medical team to guide me on sick days?
2. Have I made a sick day box with needed medicines and foods?
3. Have I trained at least two persons who can help me if I am sick?

Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Last Reviewed: August 23, 2018

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