

**TAKE 5**  
TO CARE 4 YOURSELF

# MANAGING DIABETES SAFELY DURING SICK DAYS



Think about what else you can do to help make your diabetes care plan successful.

## You can stay safe when you are sick

Illness can make it harder to manage your diabetes. You and your diabetes care team can work together to develop a sick day plan before you become ill to make it easier to take care of your diabetes when you are not feeling well.

## Keep track of your blood glucose (blood sugar)

Even if your blood glucose is usually at your goal, it can vary when you're sick. So it's important to check your blood glucose often. For example, for a minor illness check it every 6 hours, and every 2 to 3 hours for a severe illness. If you use insulin, also test for ketones every 4 to 6 hours or if blood glucose is higher than 240 mg/dL.



## Continue to take your diabetes medicines

Even if you feel too sick to eat, be sure to take your diabetes pills or insulin as directed, unless your diabetes care team tells you not to.



If you use insulin, your diabetes care team may tell you to take extra injections of insulin if your blood glucose is 250 mg/dL or higher. Even if you are vomiting (throwing up) or are unable to eat, continue taking your long-acting (basal) insulin. Ask your diabetes care team about how to adjust your insulin dose when you are sick.



If you take diabetes pills, take your usual dose. If you vomit up the pills or are not eating, call your diabetes care team. Your team may tell you to stop some types of diabetes medicines. Ask your diabetes team about how to adjust your diabetes pills when you are sick.



Check with your diabetes care team or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, like aspirin, cough syrup, or decongestants. OTC medicines might raise or lower your blood glucose. Choose sugar-free medicines if they are available.

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## Eating when you are sick

Eating well is important when you are sick, so try to follow your usual meal plan as best you can. If you are unable to stick to your meal plan but are able to eat some food, choose items from the list below. Each item counts as 1 carbohydrate choice or 15 grams of carbs. Try to eat or drink enough of the items listed to equal 45 grams of carbs. Do this every 3 to 4 hours.

- 1/2 cup fruit juice (like orange or apple)
- 1/2 cup regular (not sugar-free) soda pop
- 1/2 cup regular gelatin dessert
- 1 double ice pop
- 1 cup soup
- 1 cup sports drink
- 1 slice dry toast
- 6 soda crackers

## Low blood glucose

Being sick can make it hard to eat, so have fast acting carbs handy, such as glucose tabs, juice, or hard candies. If low blood glucose happens (less than 70 mg/dL) eat 15-20 grams of fast acting carbs and re-check your blood glucose in 15 minutes. If it is still low, repeat these steps.

**Ask your diabetes care team any questions you may have about eating when you are sick.**

## Drink up

If you feel too sick to eat solid foods, be sure to drink 6 to 8 ounces of liquids every hour. Switch between drinks that contain sugar and drinks that do not. For example, for one hour, drink regular fruit juice or soft drinks. The next hour, drink sugar-free soft drinks, unsweetened tea or coffee, or water.

Also, if you can't follow your meal plan, drink fluids that contain salt, like bouillon or clear soup.

## When to call your diabetes care team

You can call your diabetes care team any time you have questions or concerns. But you should definitely call if:

- Your blood glucose level is less than 70 mg/dL
- Your blood glucose levels are over 240 mg/dL for more than 2 checks in a row
- You are unable to keep fluids down
- You have a fever over 101° F for 24 hours
- You have severe pain in your stomach, have chest pain, or have a hard time breathing
- You have been vomiting or having diarrhea more than 3 times in 24 hours
- You have moderate amounts of ketones after more than one test
- You are not sure what to do

