

**MY DIABETES SICK DAY ACTION PLAN**

# Type 1 diabetes: multiple daily injections

**This guide can help you plan how to manage your diabetes when you are feeling sick and know when to get medical help.**

Illness and infection may raise or lower your blood glucose levels and make it harder to manage your diabetes. A plan to manage sick days before you become unwell is essential.

The Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) recommends you work with your Credentialed Diabetes Educator (CDE) to prepare a sick day kit. Keep it up to date. Your sick day kit should always include your personal sick day action plan.

**Be prepared for managing diabetes when you are unwell.**

- Know when to use your sick day plan.
- Have a sick day kit prepared and check it regularly to replace any expired items.
- Know how often to monitor your glucose and ketone levels.
- Know how to adjust your insulin doses.
- Keep a selection of suitable foods and fluids to consume when you are unwell.
- Know who to call if you need help with managing your diabetes while unwell.
- Know when to seek urgent medical help.

Name:

Date of plan:

## My emergency contacts:

Credentialed Diabetes Educator:

Endocrinologist:

General practitioner:

Local hospital emergency:

Healthdirect:

**1800 022 222** (24-hour health advice helpline)



Your trusted partner in diabetes care

ADEA is a National Health Professional  
Body Agent for the NDSS.



The NDSS is administered by Diabetes Australia

### Follow your sick day action plan when:

- you feel unwell, even if your glucose level is within your target range
- your glucose level is higher than 13 mmol/L for 2–4 hours or more, even if you feel well
- you have positive ketones in your urine or blood (0.6 mmol/L or higher on blood check OR small or higher on urine check).

### Why it's important to be prepared for sick days

When you are sick, your body produces stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These stress hormones often cause your glucose levels to rise.

You will usually need to take extra insulin to keep your glucose levels in range. If you don't give extra insulin, your body may not be able to use the glucose in your blood for energy and so will break down fat instead. This causes ketones to be produced, which are acidic and toxic to the body in large amounts. You may also develop ketones if you are not eating and are taking less insulin because of vomiting or diarrhoea.

High ketones can lead to a serious condition called diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) which may need urgent medical attention.

Symptoms of DKA include:

- nausea, vomiting and/or stomach pain
- increased thirst and/or a dry mouth
- increased urination
- rapid breathing or shortness of breath
- fruity-smelling breath
- feeling drowsy, weak, or confused

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is important that you seek urgent medical help.

### What to have in your sick day kit

Your diabetes sick day kit should contain all the items you might need to manage your diabetes when unwell, including:

- your sick day action plan, including emergency contact details (people you can call on for help if needed, such as family, friends or neighbours, members of your healthcare team and your local hospital emergency department)
- spare insulin pens and pen needles or syringes
- a record book/diary or smartphone app to record your glucose and ketone levels, and insulin doses taken
- a thermometer (optional)
- foods to treat hypoglycaemia (hypos) such as glucose gels, tablets, or jellybeans
- easy-to-eat carbohydrate foods such as plain biscuits or crackers
- drinks including water, sweetened and sugar-free drinks
- rehydration fluids such as Gastrolyte® or Hydralyte® (these can help to keep you hydrated if you are vomiting or have diarrhoea)
- pain relief medications (if you use a continuous glucose monitor (CGM), check whether some pain medications (paracetamol and aspirin) may affect the accuracy of your device).

Remember to check your sick day kit at least every three months to make sure items haven't expired. Replace used items.

## Sick day action plan

### Key steps for diabetes sick day management

- Check your glucose and ketone levels every 2 hours if ketones are above 0.6 mmol/L (small or higher on urine check) and every 4 hours if ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L (negative or trace on urine check). It is recommended that you do finger prick glucose monitoring in addition to using CGM. Blood ketone monitoring is recommended over urine strips as it is more accurate.
- Always continue taking your basal (long-acting) insulin.
- Continue to eat and drink if possible.
- Try to have 125-250 mls fluid per hour to avoid dehydration (unless your doctor has asked you to restrict your fluid because of other health conditions).
- Treat episodes of hypoglycaemia with 15g rapid-acting carbohydrate and repeat your hypo treatment every 15 minutes until above 4 mmol/L.
- If blood glucose and/or ketones are elevated, use the guidelines below to adjust your insulin doses.
- If you have significant vomiting and/or diarrhoea, see guidelines on page 5.
- Go to hospital if your blood ketones remain above 1.5 mmol/L and blood glucose remains above 13 mmol/L following two correction doses given 2 hours apart.

#### Adjusting your insulin: no ketones

If ketones are below 0.6 mmol/L on a blood check OR negative/trace on a urine check, you should:

- continue to check glucose and ketone levels at least every 4 hours
- use your usual carb ratio when eating or drinking carbohydrate foods or fluids
- use your usual correction doses to correct elevated glucose levels every 4 hours, even if you are not eating.

#### Adjusting your insulin: elevated ketones

If ketones are present (0.6 mmol/L or higher on blood check OR small or higher on urine check):

- adjust your insulin doses according to Table on the following page
- increase blood glucose and ketone monitoring to every 2 hours.

#### Continuous glucose monitoring

If you use CGM, confirm readings with a finger prick check:

- before taking action to correct out-of-range readings (remembering there is a lag time between the two readings)
- when taking paracetamol if using Medtronic Guardian 4 (or Dexcom G6 if taking more than 1000 mg every 6 hours)
- when taking more than 500 mg/day of vitamin C if using FreeStyle Libre 2.

## Adjusting your insulin doses when you have elevated ketones

Name:

Date:

KETONES	GLUCOSE LEVEL			
	Less than 4 mmol/L	4.1-8.0 mmol/L	8.1-13.0 mmol/L	Above 13.0 mmol/L
<b>Blood:</b> 0.6-1.5 mmol/L  <b>Urine:</b> small (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treat hypoglycaemia with 15g fast-acting carbohydrate</li> <li>Recheck blood glucose and repeat hypo treatment every 15 minutes until blood glucose is above 4 mmol/L</li> <li>Recheck ketones in 2 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Eat or drink carbohydrate foods or fluids and give rapid acting insulin using your usual carb ratio</li> <li>Continue usual basal insulin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Give 5-10% of TDD as rapid-acting insulin every 2 hours until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</li> <li>Use usual carb ratio when eating or drinking carbohydrate foods or fluids</li> <li>Continue usual basal insulin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Give 10-15% of TDD as rapid-acting insulin every 2 hours until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</li> <li>Use usual carb ratio when eating or drinking carbohydrate foods or fluids</li> <li><i>If glucose levels remain high, increase usual basal insulin by 10% and continue until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</i></li> </ul>
<b>Blood:</b> above 1.5 mmol/L  <b>Urine:</b> moderate /large (++)/+++	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treat hypoglycaemia with 15g fast-acting carbohydrate</li> <li>Recheck blood glucose and repeat hypo treatment every 15 minutes until blood glucose is above 4 mmol/L</li> <li>Recheck ketones in 2 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Eat or drink carbohydrate foods or fluids and give rapid acting insulin using your usual carb ratio</li> <li>Continue usual basal insulin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Give 10-15% of TDD as rapid-acting insulin every 2 hours until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</li> <li>Use usual carb ratio when eating or drinking carbohydrate foods or fluids</li> <li>Continue usual basal insulin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check blood glucose and ketones every 2 hours</li> <li>Give 15-20% of TDD as rapid-acting insulin every 2 hours until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</li> <li>Use usual carb ratio when eating or drinking carbohydrate foods or fluids</li> <li><i>If glucose levels remain high, increase usual basal insulin by 20% and continue until ketones are less than 0.6 mmol/L</i></li> </ul>

### Sick day management if you have vomiting and/or diarrhoea

If you have vomiting and/or diarrhoea and are finding it hard to eat or drink, your risk of developing ketones (starvation ketones) is increased, even if your glucose levels are low or within your target range. Nausea, vomiting and stomach pain can also be symptoms of high ketones.

If you are unwell with vomiting and/or diarrhoea, it is important to check your glucose levels and ketones every 1–2 hours.

To reduce your risk of ketones, you should:

- Always keep taking your basal insulin. However, you may need to reduce your basal (long-acting) insulin dose if you are having continual low blood glucose levels.
- Try to have 125–250 mL fluid per hour to avoid dehydration (unless your doctor has asked you to restrict your fluid because of other health conditions).
- Continue to eat and drink if possible, and choose carbohydrate-containing foods and fluids. If you are not eating your usual meals, aim for around 15g of carbohydrate per hour (from either food or drinks) during waking hours.
- If you are vomiting, wait for 30 minutes after eating to give a rapid-acting meal bolus for the carbohydrate, to make sure you have kept the food down and your glucose level has risen.

- If you take any of the following diabetes medications, stop taking them while you have vomiting, diarrhoea, or are not eating much:
  - Metformin (brand names include Diabex, Diaformin, Metex, Formet)
  - SGLT2 inhibitors (brand names include Forxiga, Qtern Xigduo, Jardiance, Jardiamet, Glyxambi) ***These medications can increase the risk of developing DKA when you are unwell.***
  - GLP-1 agonists (brand names include Victoza, Saxenda, Ozempic, Mounjaro).
- You can restart these medications when you are feeling well again (normally when you have been eating and drinking normally for 24–48 hours).

**Note:** these medications are sometimes used off-label for people with type 1 diabetes.



#### You should consider going to hospital if you:

- have vomiting that doesn't settle down
- cannot keep fluids down
- cannot keep your blood glucose level above 4.0 mmol/L
- develop high ketones (above 1.5 mmol/L on blood check or moderate/large in urine)
- are too unwell to manage your diabetes yourself.

### Seek help if needed

- When you're unwell, it can be hard to follow your sick day action plan, especially if it's the first time.
- Include in your sick day action plan details of who might stay with you to help support you. This could be a family member, friend, or neighbour.
- Phone your CDE/healthcare team early for help. This may prevent you from getting worse and needing emergency care.
- Seek medical advice to treat the underlying illness or infection.



### You must seek urgent medical help if:

- your glucose levels continue to rise despite two supplemental (extra) doses of insulin given 2 hours apart (i.e. after 4 hours)
- your blood ketone levels remain above 1.5mmol/L (moderate/large in urine) and are not decreasing despite two supplemental (extra) doses of insulin given 2 hours apart (i.e. after 4 hours)
- your glucose levels remain below 4.0 mmol/L despite two hypoglycaemia treatments
- you have persistent vomiting, especially for more than 4 hours, or if it becomes stained with red or yellow/green
- you become drowsy or confused
- you develop deep or unusual breathing
- you have stomach pain
- you have symptoms of severe dehydration (including increased thirst, dry mouth, weakness, feeling faint or dizzy, rapid heartbeat, headache, confusion, blurred vision, dry skin and lack of sweating, and reduced urination or dark urine)
- you or your support person(s) cannot carry out or follow your sick day action plan.

## The NDSS and you

Whether you have just been diagnosed with diabetes, or have been living with diabetes for a while, the NDSS provides a range of support services, information, and subsidised products to help you manage your diabetes, stay healthy and live well. For access to more resources (including translated versions), or to find out more about support services, go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) or call the **NDSS Helpline 1800 637 700**.

This information is intended as a guide only. It should not replace individual medical advice. If you have any concerns about your health, or further questions, you should contact your health professional.