



# MDwise

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## 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 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 medicines.
- 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 to prevent dehydration. Ask your doctor about how much and how often you should eat and drink when you are sick.

- If your blood sugar level is higher than the blood sugar level your doctor recommends (for example, 240 milligrams per deciliter [mg/dL]), 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. A general guideline is to 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. Your doctor may suggest more or less 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. Take insulin if your doctor told you to do so. If you don't have a sick-day plan for taking extra insulin, call your doctor for advice.

### Ketone testing

- If you are taking insulin, do a test for ketones, especially when your blood sugar is high.

### 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 symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), such as abdominal (belly) pain, vomiting, rapid breathing, fruity-smelling breath, or severe drowsiness.
- You have symptoms of dehydration, such as a dry mouth and passing only a little urine.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have a feeling of pressure in your chest.

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

- You have a blood sugar level that stays higher than the level the doctor has set for you (for example, 240 mg/dL for two or more readings).
- You have moderate or large amounts of ketones in the urine or a high level of blood ketones (for example, more than 0.6 mmol/L).
- 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 think you are having a problem with your medicine.