

## Diabetes: Simple sick day guide

---

Blood sugars usually rise when you are sick. This is because of the physical stress on the body. Sometimes, the blood sugars will increase before you actually feel sick! Talk to your medical team ahead of time so you'll be prepared to handle sick days! Here are some suggestions to help also:

- You will need to take some insulin, even if you don't eat. If you're not sure of the amount, call your doctor. Discuss with your doctor before you are sick.
- Check your blood sugars more often. Let your doctor know if they are running significantly higher than usual.
- Check ketones if you are sick or your blood sugars are >300. If you have moderate to large ketones you will need extra insulin. If you have small/trace ketones, you can usually clear them with extra (non-carbohydrate) fluids.
- You will need to have carbohydrates throughout the day. If your blood sugars are running close to 100, you should have liquids with carbs. If your blood sugars are running higher (>150), you should have carbs at meal times but your liquids do not have to have carbs in them.
- If you wear an insulin pump, be sure to change your infusion set and troubleshoot your pump. You may not be sick but may be having pump problems!
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Have small sips every 15 minutes or so.
- Have a supply of "sick day foods" on hand. Examples would be clear liquids like regular soda (Vernor's® ginger ale of course!), regular jello or popsicles. You'll have other favorites also!
- Have a supply of "over the counter" sick days meds on hand. Discuss with your doctor ahead of time what you should use for cold/flu/etc.
- Call your doctor if you have persistent vomiting, diarrhea (>3times in 24 hours) or fever (>101 for 24 hours).

## Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)

- DKA occurs when there is not enough insulin available to meet the body's needs.
- When the body does not have enough insulin, sugar cannot be used for energy. The body uses fat instead, producing dangerous levels of ketones.
- Ketones are an acid and show up first in the urine (ketonuria). If they are not treated, ketones build up in the blood (Diabetic Ketoacidosis).
- DKA is the cause of 85% of re-admissions to the hospital for someone with known diabetes. It is a very dangerous complication of Type 1 diabetes and can lead to coma or even death. The good news is that DKA is 98% preventable!

### How DKA Develops:

Lack of insulin > Higher blood sugars > Dehydration develops

Fat broken down for energy > Ketones in the urine > Diabetic Acidosis

### Prevention/Treatment:

- Check ketones if you are sick or your blood sugar is over 300mg/dL
- Increase fluid intake if your blood sugar is over 300m/gL or you are sick
- Take your insulin--**Extra insulin needed with ketones; call for assistance**

### Possible Causes:

- Stress
- Illness
- Lack of insulin
- Dehydration
- Insulin pump problems
- Chronic high blood sugars

### Symptoms:

- Upset stomach or pain
- Vomiting
- Fatigue/drowsiness
- Sweet/fruity breath
- **Deep Breathing: Go to ER!**

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

©2011 The Regents of the University of Michigan

University of Michigan Diabetes Education Program (734)998-2475

<http://www.med.umich.edu/diabetes/education/>

Last Revised 04/2012

Comprehensive Diabetes Center  
Diabetes: Sick days and DKA