

Sick Days

What happens when you are sick

When you're sick, your body is under stress. To deal with this stress, your body releases hormones that help it fight disease. But these hormones have side effects. They raise blood sugar levels and interfere with the effects of insulin. As a result, when you are sick, it is harder to keep your blood sugar (glucose) in your target range.

Being sick can make your blood sugar level go up very high. Having a plan in place ahead of time will help prevent any serious complications when sick days do arise.

Making a sick-day plan

The best way to prevent a minor illness from becoming a major problem is to work out a plan of action for sick days ahead of time. Then when you become sick, you will already know what to do and you will have the supplies on hand to do it. Make a plan by discussing it with your primary care team. The plan should include guidance on how to:

- ♦ take diabetes medications
- ♦ check blood sugar
- ♦ eat and drink
- ♦ contact your primary care team or seek urgent or emergency care, when needed



Polina Tankilevitch (photographer). Woman in Blue Sweater. [Digital image]. Retrieved from [//www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-blue-sweater-lying-on-bed-3873179/](https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-blue-sweater-lying-on-bed-3873179/)

General Tips for Sick Days

When you are sick:

Try to stick to your meal plan if you can eat. Drink a lot of sugar-free, caffeine-free liquids to stay hydrated:

- ◆ water
- ◆ broth
- ◆ diet soda



Karolina Grabowska (photographer). Chicken Noodle Soup. [Digital image]. Retrieved from // www.pexels.com/photo/bowl-with-chicken-noodle-soup-and-parsley-4210846/

Drink one large glass of liquid per hour. It's easy to run low on fluid when you are vomiting or have a fever, but the extra liquid can help bring your sugar levels down.

If you can't eat your regular foods, try easy-on-the-stomach foods like regular (non-diet) gelatin, crackers, soups, or applesauce. If even these mild foods are too hard to eat, you may have to stick to drinking liquids that contain carbohydrates. This may include regular (not diet) soft drinks. Other high-carbohydrate liquids and almost-liquids are juice, frozen juice bars, sherbet, pudding, creamed soups, and fruit-flavored yogurt. Broth is also a good choice.

Be prepared

To prepare for sick days, have on hand at home a small stock of non-diet soft drinks, broth, applesauce, and regular gelatin.

When you are sick enough to change your eating or medication routine:

- ♦ check your blood sugar every 3-4 hours
- ♦ if not in your normal range, contact your primary care team
- ♦ continue medications for your diabetes

Even if you are throwing up, don't stop your medications. You need them because your body makes extra glucose (sugar) when you are sick.



Pixabay (photographer). Glucometer [Digital image]. Retrieved from [//www.canva.com/media/MADQ4yM9GH4](https://www.canva.com/media/MADQ4yM9GH4)

Your sick-day plan may tell you to adjust how you take your medications. If you don't have a sick-day plan or if you have questions about how to take your medications when you are sick, call your primary care team.

You may want to take extra medications when you are sick. For example, if you have a cold, you may want to take a cough medicine. Always check the label of over-the-counter medicines before you buy them to see if they have sugar. Small doses of medicines with sugar are usually okay. But to be on the safe side, ask the pharmacist or your primary care team about sugar-free medicines.

When to call a healthcare provider



Pixabay (photographer). Emergency Room [Digital image]. Retrieved from [//www.pexels.com/photo/ambulance-architecture-building-business-263402/](https://www.pexels.com/photo/ambulance-architecture-building-business-263402/)

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if you:

- ♦ have severe belly pain
- ♦ have trouble breathing
- ♦ have a feeling of pressure in your chest

Call your primary care team or seek medical care if:

- ♦ your blood sugar is higher than 240 after you have taken the amount of medication in your sick-day plan, and stays high for more than 24 hours
- ♦ you are not able to take your diabetes medicines because of vomiting
- ♦ your blood sugar level drops below 70, and you have symptoms of low blood sugar that do not go away after eating food that contains sugar
- ♦ 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 are breathing fast
- ♦ your breath smells fruity
- ♦ your mouth is dry
- ♦ your urine is a very dark color
- ♦ you think you are having a problem with your medicine
- ♦ you aren't sure what to do to take care of yourself



Your primary care team may ask what medications you've taken and how much, how long you've been sick, whether you can eat and keep food down, whether you've lost weight, and what your temperature and blood sugar levels are. To be prepared, keep written records of all these things as soon as you become sick.

Open ClipArt(photographer). Heartbeat [Digital image]. Retrieved from <http://creazilla.com/nodes/71298-heartbeat-clipart>