

**Patient
Information**

Sick day rules

Introduction

This leaflet provides useful advice, for people with diabetes, on how to manage the condition if they are ill.

What happens when you are ill?

People who have diabetes do not get more illnesses than other people. However, if you are ill, your blood glucose levels may be more difficult to control but will return to your usual levels once you are better.

What happens to your diabetes when you are ill?

A rise in your blood glucose levels is part of the body's natural response to illness. Blood glucose levels may rise, even if you are not eating and drinking. This is because your body releases sugars from its stores.

What should you do if you are ill?

- **You should not stop taking your insulin** or diabetes tablets.
- Test your blood glucose levels more frequently than normal, even if you are not eating or drinking normally. You should test more frequently than normal, as your blood glucose levels are likely to be high.
- Test for ketones, as instructed by your diabetes nurse (see the leaflet testing for ketones).
- The presence of ketones suggests that, you are lacking in insulin/ carbohydrate and in danger of developing ketoacidosis.
- If you find ketones, you should seek advice without delay from your GP, practice nurse or the diabetes nurses at the hospital.
- Try to drink at least 2 to 3 litres (4 to 6 pints) of sugar free fluids, throughout the day.

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- Try to eat your normal diet or replace your meals with alternatives such as: original Lucozade®, milk, soup, ice cream, fruit, Complan®, or flat lemonade.
- Unless you keep up your intake of carbohydrate, your body will switch over to burning fat stores, which produces the acids called ketones.
- If you are vomiting, you must contact your GP, diabetes nurses or NHS 111 for advice. You may require hospital treatment.

Insulin dose

Illness is one situation when you may need to adjust your insulin dose. This would be based on your blood glucose levels recorded just before you inject your insulin. You do not have to wait for 3 consecutive days of high blood glucose readings, before making changes to the insulin doses.

If your blood glucose levels are:

- less than 13 mmol/L, continue with your normal insulin doses
- between 13 mmol/L, and 20 mmol/L increase your insulin doses by 2 units
- above 20 mmol/L, increase your insulin doses by 4 units

If you are not sure about how much to increase your insulin doses contact your GP, practice nurse or diabetes nurses for advice.

If you have increased your insulin dose in response to illness, you will have to reduce the doses fairly quickly once you feel better.

When to seek medical advice

You should contact your GP, diabetes nurses, or NHS 111 if:

- you are vomiting or have diarrhoea
- your blood glucose level is over 20 mmol/L
- your blood glucose level is under 4 mmol/L
- you have ketones on blood or urine testing
- you are worried

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Vomiting, diarrhoea, rapid breathing or drowsiness can lead to serious problems if not treated quickly. Hospital treatment is essential. Call your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

Contact information**Diabetes Nurses**

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4266 (answerphone)

Email: ghn-tr.diabetesnurses@nhs.net

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8613 (answerphone)

Email: ghn-tr.diabetesnurses@nhs.net

Please, leave your name and a contact number and a member of the team will return your call within 48hours.

NHS 111

Tel 111

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