

Patient Education Sheet

Diabetes and “Sick Day” Rules

What is meant by “sick day?”

A “sick day” is any time that an infection or other physical stress on the body is present. This could include a common cold, a gum infection, a stomach virus, a urinary tract infection or a foot infection. The stress of surgery or a broken bone can also be considered “sick days.” **Before you become ill**, you should discuss your plan to handle “sick days” with your physician.

How is blood sugar control affected by “sick days?”

Usually, blood sugar levels rise during an illness. As a result, you may require an increase in the diabetes medication you normally take. This is true, even if you are eating less food than you normally do. Careful and regular monitoring of your blood sugar level will help you and your physician determine how much medication you need.

How do I know if my blood sugar is high when I am sick?

Blood sugar needs to be measured using a glucose meter. Your physician may instruct you to check your blood sugar more often than you usually do when you are ill. Checking blood sugar levels every 4 to 6 hours is not uncommon. If you are on intensive insulin therapy (that is several injections of insulin each day or on an insulin pump), you

may need to check your blood sugar every 2 to 4 hours.

What should I do if my blood sugar readings are high?

Generally, if your blood sugar reading is more than 250 mg/dl for two checks in a row you should call your physician. If you have type 1 diabetes and your urine ketones are “small” or greater, you **must** call your physician. Your physician will give you directions for controlling your blood sugar during your illness.

Should I take my medicine even if I am unable to eat?

Never stop taking medication for diabetes unless your physician instructs you to do so. Stopping diabetes medication when you are sick without the advice of your physician can lead to a rapid rise in blood sugar levels that could require hospitalization. Call your doctor to report an illness and to determine if your usual dose of diabetes medication needs adjusting.

What should I do if I can’t eat my regular meals?

- Keep well hydrated. Drink at least 8 ounces of water or other calorie-free, caffeine-free beverage every hour.
- Try eating lighter foods to provide calories and

carbohydrates similar to your usual meal plan.

- If you are unable to keep down solid foods, drink liquids providing about 50 grams of carbohydrate every 3 to 4 hours.

Food	Portion	Grams of Carbohydrate
Crackers, soda	4 – 6	15
Cereal, cooked	½ cup	15
Soup	1 cup	15 – 20
Fruit juice	½ cup	15
Soda, regular	¾ cup	15
Gelatin, regular	½ cup	20
Popsicles	1	24
Pudding, regular	½ cup	30
Sherbet	½ cup	30
Ice cream	½ cup	15
Broth	1 cup	-
Milk	1 cup	12
Pudding, sugar-free	½ cup	15
Yogurt, plain, artificially sweetened	1 cup	17
Yogurt, fruit flavored	1 cup	40 -60

When do I need to call my physician?

In the course of illness, call your physician if you experience any of the following:

- You feel too sick to eat normally and are unable to keep food down for more than 6 hours.
- You are having severe diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You lose 5 pounds or more in a two to three day time period.
- Your temperature is over 101.5° F or rising for more than 24 hours.
- Your blood glucose is lower than 60 mg/dl.
- You have small or greater ketones in your urine.
- You have trouble breathing.
- **If you feel sleepy or cannot think clearly, have someone call your physician or call 911.**

Notes/Additional Information:

Source:

American Diabetes Association @ www.diabetes.org
 American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists @ www.aace.com