

# Sick day rules for people with Type 2 Diabetes on insulin



Patient Information Leaflet

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FEEL UNWELL?

People with diabetes do not have more illness than others, but if you do become unwell it is likely that your blood glucose control will be affected.

## HIGH BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS (HYPERGLYCAEMIA)

If your blood glucose level is constantly above target you may begin to develop some of the symptoms that you had before your diabetes was diagnosed. The early symptoms include:

- ❖ Increased thirst
- ❖ Dry mouth
- ❖ Passing a lot of urine
- ❖ Tiredness and lethargy
- ❖ High urine or blood glucose levels.

## Common illnesses, which could raise your blood glucose levels include:

- ❖ A cold, flu or virus
- ❖ Stomach upset
- ❖ Sore throats
- ❖ Urinary infections
- ❖ Chest infection
- ❖ Abscesses
- ❖ Injury, such as a broken bone

Taking steroid tablets or injections will also raise your blood glucose.

## Sick Day Rules:

- ❖ Your blood glucose may rise above normal even if you are not able to eat your normal meals or drink anything, so **never stop taking your insulin.**
- ❖ Test your blood glucose levels every 2-4 hours and adjust your insulin - see adjustment leaflets, which have been provided by your diabetes healthcare team.
- ❖ To prevent dehydration try to drink 5 pints of sugar free liquids per day. This is approximately one glass every hour.
- ❖ If you are sick or unable to eat solid carbohydrate foods replace these with liquid carbohydrates such as fruit juice, ordinary lemonade/coke.
- ❖ If you are not being sick but have lost your appetite, try milky drinks, ordinary jelly (not sugar free) ice cream or custard.
- ❖ As you start to feel better, reintroduce solid foods and discontinue sugary drinks.
- ❖ It is important to rest.

## Each of these contains approximately 10 grams of carbohydrate:

Milk	1 cup (200ml)
Fruit Juice (unsweetened)	1 small glass (100ml)
Coca-Cola (not diet)	100mls
Lemonade (fizzy/sweetened)	100mls
Ice cream	1 scoop (50g)
Jelly (ordinary)	2 tablespoons (65g)
Yoghurt (fruit) – low calorie	1 small carton (120gms)
Yoghurt (plain)	1 small carton (120gms)

**Very occasionally** your blood glucose levels may fall during illness. Low blood glucose is also known as hypoglycaemia or hypo. If this happens and your blood glucose is below 4 mmols, treat the hypo with e.g. 150-200ml (large glass) of ordinary lemonade, 4-6 glucose tablets, or 3-4 soft sweets and reduce your insulin by 2-4 units. Keep reducing the insulin in this way until your blood glucose test rises above 4mmols. When you are feeling better, gradually increase the insulin back to your usual dose. Further information on hypos can be found in the NHS Lanarkshire leaflet “Having a Hypo” available on from your diabetes team or from the [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) website and search for Diabetes service.

### Contact your Diabetes Team or GP urgently if:

- ❖ You continue to vomit and/or are unable to keep anything down.
- ❖ You have missed more than one meal.
- ❖ Your symptoms do not improve within 24-48 hours.
- ❖ You are worried about any aspect of your illness.
- ❖ You need assistance to alter your insulin doses.



[www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)

For further information go to:  
[Diabetes MCN website](#)

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 30 30 243 or e-mail [info@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:info@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

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