

An educational message from  
Diabetes Singapore



# What do you do WHEN YOU ARE SICK?

When you are sick, your body reacts by releasing hormones to fight infection. Your body fights the disease through many mechanisms, including changes in hormone levels, which can raise or lower your blood sugar levels. However, as the hormones raise your blood sugar levels, they will also make it more difficult for insulin to lower blood sugar levels.

Here are some tips on how to manage your diabetes when you are ill:

**1** When sick, **continue taking your medicines for diabetes.**

Even if you are throwing up, do not stop taking your medicines. You need them because your body makes extra glucose (sugar) when you are sick. Take your usual dose of insulin/oral medication. **DO NOT OMIT YOUR INJECTION/MEDICATION.**

**2** Eating and drinking can be a big problem when you are sick. But it is important to **stick to your normal meal plan** if you can. Drink plenty of water to keep your body hydrated. This will help to prevent hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose). **Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic drinks** as these may interfere with your medication.

**3** Check your blood glucose at least four to six hourly as some medication may increase your blood glucose, which will require you to adjust your medication accordingly. (Please check with your doctor on how to adjust your medication during sick days.)

**4** Call your doctor if:

- ➔ you have a fever (temperature over 101°F or 38.3°C).
- ➔ you have diarrhoea or are vomiting and are unable to eat food, or drink fluids containing glucose or carbohydrates.
- ➔ you have persistent vomiting or diarrhoea.
- ➔ your fever persists longer than 24 hours.
- ➔ your blood sugar stays higher than 180 mg/dL or lower than 70 mg/dL.

**5** Rest. Do not exercise.

**6** Test your urine or blood for ketones. If you have type 2 diabetes, you have a very low chance of developing ketoacidosis. However, during severe illnesses, it is possible that ketoacidosis may develop. You should test your urine for ketones when:

- ➔ you feel severely sick (have a cold, the flu or other illness) and/or have unexplained nausea or vomiting.
- ➔ your blood glucose level is high (over 300 milligrams per deciliter or mg/dL) and continues to rise throughout the day.

**7** Some suggestions for sick-day diet:

- ➔ Small and frequent meals.
- ➔ Nutrient-dense soft foods or liquids such as porridge with other ingredients, milk, soy bean milk, and nutrition supplement formula.
- ➔ Adequate fluid intake.

**It is very important to learn how to manage your illness when you are sick.  
Please consult your physician for further advice on diabetes and sick-day management.**