

TYPE 2 DIABETES: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE ILL



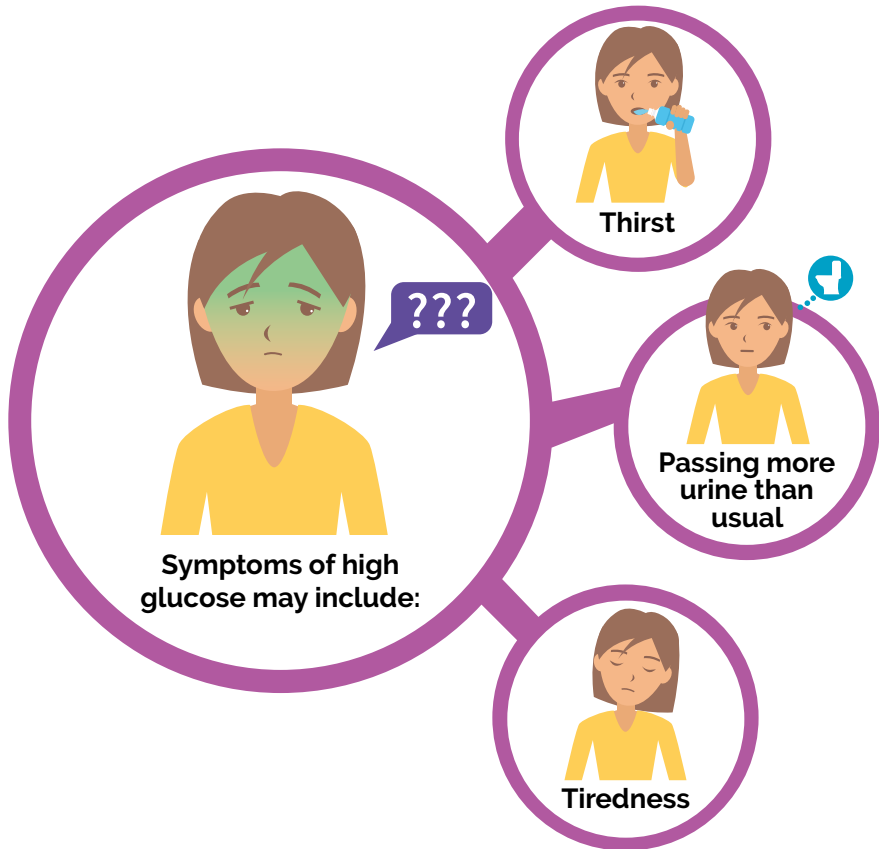
➤ WHY IS THIS LEAFLET FOR YOU?

Everyone has days when they are not well. If you have diabetes, being unwell can affect your glucose control so it is important that you know how to manage this. This leaflet will give you essential information on:

- How illness affects your glucose levels
- Looking after yourself
- What to eat and drink
- Managing your medication
- When to seek help

➤ HOW DOES ILLNESS AFFECT YOUR GLUCOSE LEVELS?

When you are ill, especially if you have an infection and high temperature, your body is less responsive to the insulin you produce naturally or may be injecting. Insulin is a hormone which controls your glucose levels. Being unwell therefore usually makes your glucose levels rise, even if you are eating less than usual.



⚠ It is possible to manage your diabetes effectively during illness and keep your glucose levels in or near to target by following the simple advice given in this leaflet

The background is a vibrant blue with various medical supplies scattered around. At the top left is an orange pill bottle with a white label. Below it is a white pill. To the right is a blue and black syringe, a red and blue capsule, and a small blue bottle with a white cap. Further right is a blister pack with red and blue capsules. On the left side, there's a large blue syringe and a small white bottle. At the bottom left is a green bottle with a white cap and a yellow bandage. At the bottom center is a white pill. At the bottom right is a large black bottle with an orange label featuring a white flower, a small white bottle, and a yellow pill. A white clipboard with a blue 'Rx' and a purple circle with the number '3' is also visible.

> LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- ✓ **Rest:** avoid strenuous exercise
- ✓ **Prevent dehydration** by drinking plenty of sugar-free fluids. Sip gently throughout the day (at least 2 ½ to 3 ½ litres or 4 to 6 pints in 24 hours)
- ✓ **Treat symptoms** such as a high temperature or a cough with basic over-the-counter medicines such as painkillers and cough syrups. These do not have to be sugar-free varieties as they contain very little glucose and are taken in small quantities. Ask your pharmacist for advice
- ✓ **Contact your GP** if you think you have an infection as you may need antibiotics
- ✓ If you are able to **monitor your glucose levels**, check at least 4 times daily while you are unwell
- ✓ You may need to **adjust your diabetes medication** while you are ill
- ✓ **Seek medical help** if your readings remain higher than usual, you feel very unwell and you are not sure what to do

> WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND DRINK?

Your body uses a lot of energy when you are unwell, even if you are resting. Try to eat as normal but if you cannot manage your usual meals, replace these with light and easily digested foods such as soups and milky puddings. See the table below for a list of alternative food options. **Each portion is equal to approximately 10 gram carbohydrate** (e.g. an egg-size potato, a small slice of bread or a tablespoon of cooked rice or pasta):



Fruit juice
100 ml



Milk
200 ml



Plain vanilla ice-cream
1 large scoop



Tomato soup
200 gram (half a large tin)



Low fat yoghurt
150 gram (1 small pot)



2 Rich tea or malted milk biscuits

➤ MANAGING YOUR DIABETES MEDICATION

If you take diabetes tablets or a non-insulin injection and feel unwell:

Continue to take your tablets even if you are not eating. **However:**

- If you are taking:
 - Metformin
 - or SGLT2 inhibitor
 - or an ACE inhibitor, such as Ramipril
 - or an ARB, such as Losartan

and you are vomiting or have diarrhoea, you should pause this medication as you may be at risk of dehydration. If you take an SGLT2 inhibitor and you are unwell you should test for ketones.

- If you take a tablet which helps your body to produce more insulin, such as gliclazide, you may need to increase the dose or even need insulin injections for a short time while you are ill. You will need meal replacements if you are unable to eat normally
- Contact your GP if you feel like your symptoms are prolonged or getting worse
- If you are injecting a non-insulin glucose-lowering medication and develop acute abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, stop the injections immediately and seek urgent medical attention



If you take insulin:

- Monitor and record your glucose levels at least four times a day (at mealtimes even if you are not eating your usual meals, and at bedtime)
- If your glucose readings are **higher** than usual, you may need to increase your insulin dose (see table on page 6). Contact your GP or diabetes nurse if you are not sure how to do this

If your glucose levels are **lower** than usual (because you are eating less than usual) you may need to reduce your insulin or any tablet you are taking which helps your body produce more insulin.

➤ MANAGING YOUR INSULIN DOSES DURING ILLNESS

If your glucose levels are persistently greater than 11 mmol/L, you will need to increase your insulin dose

Glucose level	Additional insulin
11.1 to 17 mmol/L	Add 2 extra units to each dose
17.1 to 22 mmol/L	Add 4 extra units to each dose
Over 22 mmol/L	Add 6 extra units to each dose

If you are taking more than 50 units in total daily, you should double the adjustments. All adjustments are incremental and should be reduced gradually as the illness subsides. Contact your doctor, practice nurse or diabetes specialist nurse for advice if you feel unsure about adjusting your insulin doses.

If your glucose levels are dropping down to 4 mmol/L or less, reduce your insulin dose by 10% (i.e. if your dose is usually 20 units, reduce by 2 units, if it is usually 40 units, reduce by 4 units). Make sure you have suitable "hypo" treatments available such as dextrose tablets, glucojuice or jelly babies



➤ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Call your GP or diabetes specialist nurse for immediate help:

- ⚠ If you are pregnant
- ⚠ If you have persistent vomiting and are unable to keep fluids down
- ⚠ If you become drowsy and breathless
- ⚠ If you have acute abdominal pain
- ⚠ If your condition worsens despite following the advice given in this leaflet

If you need to go to hospital, remember to take a list of all your medications and insulin safety card (if injecting insulin) with you



> BEING PREPARED:

- ❗ Make sure you always have plenty of tablets/insulin and monitoring equipment especially in winter time, when people around you are unwell or you are travelling and may become ill
- ❗ Keep a few simple medicines such as painkillers and cough syrup in a safe place in the house
- ❗ Discuss how to manage your diabetes when you are unwell with your practice nurse or doctor so you know what to do if you become ill and when to seek help
- ❗ Where possible ensure that family members are aware of how to manage diabetes when you are unwell



> USEFUL RESOURCES:

A number of useful leaflets are available on the Trend Diabetes website including information about low glucose (hypoglycaemia), driving and diabetes, Type 2 diabetes and steroid treatment, diabetes and travel, and Type 2 diabetes and diabetic ketoacidosis.

Trend Diabetes: www.trenddiabetes.online

Diabetes UK: www.diabetes.org.uk

Diabetes UK: ☎ 0345 123 2399



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