Welcome

Sick Days
Made Simple
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What happens if I get a cold or the flu?

Having a cold or flu is no fun — and it can be even more challenging when you have diabetes. That’s because illness creates added stress in your body, and stress can cause your blood glucose to go too high or too low. These fluctuating blood glucose levels can make it harder for your body to fight off a cold or flu. However, when you know how to plan and prepare for a sick day, you’ll be confident you can make the best of it and keep your blood glucose under control.

Prevention is the key

Almost everyone will catch a cold or flu at some time. As a person with diabetes, you may be at a greater risk for complications from the flu. The good news is that there are precautions you can take to help avoid becoming sick.
Get a flu shot

Diabetes Canada recommends that you get a flu shot (influenza vaccine).\(^1\) While getting a flu shot can’t guarantee that you will not get the flu, it’s a good preventive measure. A flu shot is safe and effective, and is given by injection — usually in the upper arm. The main side-effects you might notice are soreness, stiffness, reddening, or swelling in your arm for a day or so after the shot.

It is recommended that people with diabetes have the pneumococcal immunization as there is a higher risk of pneumococcal (lung) disease\(^1\).

This vaccine is not usually available at flu clinics; ask your healthcare provider if it is right for you.
Be prepared

The flu virus can be passed from one person to another for up to two days **before** any symptoms appear. You might not realize you have been exposed or know when you will get sick. Stocking up on items you will need if you do get sick is important so you are prepared.

**Preventive Measures**

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water\(^2\)
- Cough and sneeze into your arm instead of your hands, or use a tissue\(^2\)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth\(^2\)
- Eat well and stay hydrated
- Get regular physical activity
- Be cautious around people who are sick
What are symptoms of a cold or the flu?

Diabetes is different for everyone, and so are cold and flu symptoms. You might experience:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting
-Diarrhea
Build a sick days kit

No one plans to get sick, so building a sick days kit is a great way to be prepared. That way you won’t have to go out while you’re not feeling well to gather the supplies you need. You might consider having a special bag or location for your sick-day supplies so you are ready should the sneezes, sniffles, aches, and pains arrive.
Supplies for your sick days kit

**Food and drinks that are easy on your stomach**
- saltine crackers
- can of broth
- juice
- herbal tea

**Cough/cold/flu medicines**
Many of these medicines contain sugar, so check with your pharmacist. Read the labels and look for sugar-free alternatives. BENYLIN®, for example, has cough syrup tailored specifically to people with diabetes (see page 18).

**Antidiarrheal medicine**
Ask your healthcare professional about when to take antidiarrheal medicine. Diarrhea can cause dehydration, so be sure to drink plenty of fluids.

**Thermometer**
A fever is a sign of infection, so it’s important to check your temperature.
Medicines to reduce fever

Medications such as TYLENOL® can help relieve fever symptoms. Check with your pharmacist as some products may not be recommended for people with diabetes.

Blood glucose meter and strips

Keep your test strip prescription filled so you don’t run out.

Doctor’s phone number

Notify your doctor if your blood glucose average is over 14.0 mmol/L or if you are sick for two consecutive days or more.

Ketone testing meter and strips or urine ketone strips (if recommended)

If your blood glucose is higher than 14.0 mmol/L, or if you have type 1 diabetes, your healthcare professional will recommend that you check your ketones periodically.
Sick days checklist

Are you prepared? Here are some items that are helpful to include in your sick days kit.

- **Sick Days Booklet**
  (along with any other guidelines provided by your healthcare professional)

- **Test strips for your meter**
  (check expiration date every six months)

- **Logbook to record blood glucose results**
  Consider downloading a digital diabetes management tool such as the OneTouch Reveal® app to automatically log your results* without the need for pen or paper.

- **Your healthcare team’s phone numbers:**

*When used with the OneTouch Verio Flex™ meter
Ketone strips
(if recommended by your healthcare professional. Check the expiration date every six months)

Foods that are easy on the stomach
Ex: Saltine crackers, can of broth, juice

2 bottles of water

Antidiarrheal medicine
(as advised by your healthcare professional)

Thermometer

Antifever medicine/
Cough and cold medicine
(as advised by your healthcare professional)

When used with the OneTouch Verio Flex™ meter
What should I do if I get sick?

Talk to your doctor

If you think you have the flu, talk to your doctor. Anti-viral prescription medicine works best if taken within two days of getting the flu. You should not wait until you have been sick for several days to see your doctor.

Check your blood glucose frequently

When you are sick, you will need to stay on top of your blood glucose levels. That means testing every 2 to 4 hours. Write down your results and talk to your healthcare professional if your numbers are going too high or too low. Your diabetes medication may need to be adjusted.
Take your diabetes medication

Although you might not be eating as much, you still need your diabetes medication. In fact, you might need even more. Check with your healthcare professional.

If you have high blood glucose results

If your blood glucose is higher than 14.0 mmol/L, your healthcare professional will recommend that you check your ketones using ketone strips or a special meter. If you are producing ketones, your body is not getting enough glucose. That means your fat is breaking down to try to give you glucose for energy. Ketones are acidic, and you could become very ill if your blood glucose is high and you have moderate to high levels of ketones.

If you have ketones, you should call your healthcare professional immediately or go to the hospital.
Try to eat and stay hydrated

You might not feel like eating when you are sick, but you need nutrients and energy to get well. You can choose to eat small, light snacks instead of full meals, as long as you remember to eat regularly.

• If your blood glucose is high, drink some sugar-free liquids—up to 1 cup every hour (water is a good choice). Avoid caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, and cola, as they may cause you to become dehydrated.

• If you are not able to eat, replace some of your usual food with fluids that contain sugar—such as juice, regular soft drinks, milk, meal replacement drinks, or sports drinks.

• If you are vomiting or have diarrhea, stay hydrated to replace the fluids you are losing.

If possible, you should plan to have 50 grams of carbs at each meal. If you’re not up to a full meal, try small, frequent snacks to get your energy up.

Each of the following foods have 10–15 grams of carbs:

- 6 saltine crackers
- 5 vanilla wafers
- 3 graham crackers
- 1 slice dry toast
- 1 cup of milk
- 1/2 cup of juice
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
Check your pulse and breathing rate
If they are increasing it may be a sign you are getting sicker, contact your doctor.4

Check your temperature
A fever is a sign that you have an infection and might need prescription medication. A normal body temperature is between 36.5 and 37.5°C. If your temperature is high it is especially important to drink 1 cup of fluid every hour.

Weigh yourself
If you are losing weight contact your doctor.4

If you vomit more than two times in four hours, you should seek medical help.
When should I get medical help?

Knowing when to seek medical attention is important. Here are some signs that you may need to see a doctor:

- If you are too sick to eat or cannot keep any food or fluids down
- If you have severe diarrhea
- If your temperature is over 38.3°C
- If your blood glucose is higher than 14.0 mmol/L
- If you have moderate to high ketones in your urine
- If your pulse rate or breathing rate are increasing
- If you are losing weight
- If you feel sleepy or are confused
What should I know about over-the-counter medications?

Check with your pharmacist to see which medications are the best fit with your diabetes management plan. Inform him or her that you have diabetes, and ask what you should take for your symptoms.

Some things to be aware of:

• The medications will not get rid of your cold or flu, but they will offer some relief from the symptoms.

• Anything in liquid form might contain sugar, which could affect your blood glucose levels. Be sure to read the label or check with your pharmacist.

• Some medications are not recommended for people with diabetes. You can usually find this information on the label, but check with your pharmacist if you’re not sure.
Depending on your symptoms, you might use:

**Cough medications**

- Choose cough medications that are sucrose-free and/or are suitable for people with diabetes.
- BENYLIN® has a variety of sucrose-free options.

**Decongestants**

- Traditional decongestants such as pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine are not suitable for people with diabetes because they might decrease the effects of your diabetes medicine and increase your blood pressure. They should only be used under the advice of a physician.
- BENYLIN® Cough & Chest Congestion for People with Diabetes is specially formulated with menthol, a decongestant suitable for people with diabetes, providing the same effective cough, congestion and mucus relief expected from BENYLIN®.

*To be sure this product is right for you always read and follow the label.*
Antihistamines

- Antihistamines do not affect diabetes, but they should be used with caution by the elderly as they might cause low blood pressure.

NSAIDS

- NSAIDS are medications such as ibuprofen and naproxen. Ask the pharmacist if these are safe for you.

Acetaminophen

- Acetaminophen medications, such as TYLENOL®, are used to reduce fever and relieve mild/moderate pain from headaches, sore throats and muscles aches.
- Talk to your doctor, and carefully follow directions on the package label.
Test, rest, and recover

Congratulations! You’ve put together your sick day kit, know when to talk to your healthcare professional about medications, and know what stomach-friendly foods to have on-hand when you are sick. While being sick presents unique challenges for people with diabetes, with proper planning and preparation, you will have the confidence to handle whatever bug comes your way.
Taking a step forward starts with seeing where you are.

The OneTouch Verio Flex™ meter with ColourSure™ technology makes it easier to understand your results and the OneTouch Reveal® mobile app helps you track them.

Speak to your pharmacist to get your

FREE OneTouch Verio Flex™ meter
with purchase of 100 OneTouch Verio® test strips
References


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Vaccination is your best protection against the flu³.

Talk to your Rexall™ pharmacist to make an appointment today.