

Type 1 Diabetes and Your Child: Sick-Day Plan



When your child is sick, their blood sugar (glucose) levels may change. This may make blood sugar harder to manage. You will need to:

- Watch your child closely.
- Check their blood sugar more often.
- Check their blood or urine for ketones. Ketones are the waste when the body burns fat instead of glucose for energy. The condition is called ketosis.
- Adjust your child's insulin dosage. Your child's healthcare provider will tell you what to do.

To be ready, work with your child's provider to create a sick-day plan. This should include:

- What to monitor, check, and adjust during an illness
- The provider's phone numbers (including after-hour numbers and when to call 911)

Keep a copy of the plan in an easily accessible place. Also keep a copy with you in case your child becomes ill when you are away from home. If your child spends a lot of time with other caregivers, like grandparents, make sure they also have a copy.

Educate your child's daycare providers and teachers about diabetes and diabetes care. The American Diabetes Association's Safe at School program has tips on how to set up a diabetes care program at your child's school.

Caring for your child

Infections, the flu, and even a cold can cause your child's blood sugar to rise. And things like eating less, having an upset stomach (nausea), and vomiting may cause their blood sugar to fall. When your child is sick you may do the following:

- **Have a sick-day box ready.** Before your child gets sick, make a sick-day box. The box may include: a thermometer, blood and urine ketone testing strips, and medicines your child's provider advise. The provider may advise other types of insulin for high glucose levels or glucagon for low glucose levels. Also add a can of soup, crackers, sugar-free juice, and regular juice. And keep some frozen juice bars, some with sugar and some without sugar, in the freezer. Check the expiration dates on the sick-day box items once a month. Put a copy of the sick-day plan in the box. Know what over-the-counter medicines contain sugar.
- **Encourage your child to eat and drink.** This will help regulate your child's blood sugar and keep them from becoming dehydrated.
- **Have other food options ready.** If your child can't eat, have them sip fruit juices, soft drinks with sugar, or ice cubes made from juice or sugar water. Or try gelatin, frozen juice bars, or low-fat ice cream.
- **Make sure your child drinks plenty of water.** Your child has to stay hydrated.
- **Test blood glucose often.** You may need to check your child's blood sugar every few hours, or even more often.
- **Don't skip insulin.** Always keep giving insulin. Even if your child is not eating, you still need to replace the basal rate of the insulin the body is always producing. Adjust the amount of insulin you give your child according to the sick-day plan. But don't skip insulin, even if your child is vomiting. Skipping insulin could lead to ketoacidosis (see below). Call your child's provider if you're not sure how much insulin you should give your child. Don't let your child exercise while their urine or blood ketones and sugar are still high.

What is ketosis?

The body needs glucose for energy. If the body doesn't get the glucose it needs, it starts burning fat. But fat is not the best fuel for the body. Ketones can build up in the blood and urine. This is called ketosis. Ketones are a warning sign of ketoacidosis. Check your child's blood or urine for ketones when sick, as directed by their healthcare provider, usually every 4 hours. Call your child's provider right away if there are ketones in the blood or urine.

What is ketoacidosis?

When ketone levels are high, it can lead to ketoacidosis. Watch your child for the symptoms of ketoacidosis. They include:

- Upset stomach and vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Fast and deep breathing
- Fruity-smelling breath
- Blurred vision
- Hard time focusing or confusion
- Dry or flushed skin
- Ketones are positive in the urine or blood

Ketoacidosis is a medical emergency. If you think your child has ketoacidosis, call 911 or take them to the hospital emergency room right away.

When to call the healthcare provider

Call your child's healthcare provider if:

- You're not sure how much insulin to give when your child is sick.
- Your child's blood sugar is higher than normal or over 250 mg/dL and doesn't go down after getting insulin.
- Your child's blood sugar level is lower than normal or less than 70 mg/dL.
- Your child's blood or urine has ketones.
- Your child has new symptoms, or their symptoms get worse.

Call 911

Call 911 right away if:

- You test your child for ketones and think they have ketoacidosis.

To learn more

For more information about diabetes, visit these websites:

- [American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

- [Children with Diabetes at www.childrenwithdiabetes.com](http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com)
- [Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International at www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org)
- [Endocrine Society at www.endocrine.org/topics/diabetes](http://www.endocrine.org/topics/diabetes)

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