

COVID-19 & Diabetes

Living with diabetes has its challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic can cause worry and stress. It's important to note that being diabetic does not increase your risk of contracting COVID-19. Diabetics do, however, have a harder time fighting off infections like the viral infection caused by COVID-19 if your diabetes is not well-managed.

Minimize Risk

Minimize your risk of contracting COVID-19 by following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines:

- Wash your hands for at least 20-seconds regularly.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Clean surfaces like metal and plastic regularly.
- Stay home if you feel ill and avoid those who feel ill.



Keeping your blood sugar levels in range is important, as high blood sugar suppresses your immune system. Check your blood sugar levels frequently to avoid any substantial drops or peaks. It is also good to have plenty of foods on hand to help you safely and efficiently manage your carbohydrate intake.

Be sure to stock up on supplies for managing your diabetes, including:

- Insulin
- Blood sugar test strips
- Alcohol wipes
- Other essential medical supplies

Having extra medications that you take regularly on hand also is important. If a State of Emergency is declared where you live, you may be able to refill prescriptions early. It's better to be prepared than to be caught without critical diabetes supplies and medications if you are quarantined or catch COVID-19.

Be Prepared and Watch for Symptoms

As someone with diabetes, it is important that you have a plan to follow if symptoms of COVID-19 develop. Pack a "to-go bag" of diabetic medical supplies and medicine in case you need to go to the hospital and have a list of phone numbers for the doctors involved in your medical care.

It is common for diabetics to develop a condition called diabetic ketoacidosis with viral infections. This condition can make it challenging for diabetics to regulate fluid consumption and electrolyte levels and can lead to sepsis. If you feel as though you are getting sick, regularly check for symptoms of elevated ketones. Elevated ketones can be a sign of high blood sugar. It may be hard to swallow fluids and foods, so keep a variety of foods and beverages like sodas stocked.

Blood sugar levels also may vary if you decrease your carbohydrate or fluid intake when you feel sick. Monitor your blood sugar levels more frequently than usual during an illness to manage fluctuating blood sugar levels. Be aware that over the counter (OTC) medications can have an effect on your blood sugar. Many OTC cough syrups contain sugar, and while there are syrups that do not contain sugar, these medications can cause your blood sugar levels to rise.

Other medications can be used to treat the symptoms of COVID-19, but should be used with caution if you are diabetic.

- Decongestants can raise blood sugar levels.
- Aspirin taken in large doses can cause blood sugar levels to drop.
- Acetaminophen can cause false or no readings in continuous glucose monitors.
- Ibuprofen can alter the hypoglycemic effect of insulin.

Consult your doctor before taking any medication.

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