American Diabetes Association®

Sick Day Guide for People with Diabetes

BEFORE YOU GET SICK

Create a sick day action plan with your doctor:

- How often to check blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Whether to adjust insulin or medications
- When to check for ketones
- Which over-the-counter (OTC) medications are safe to use
- How to prevent low blood glucose (hypoglycemia)
- What to eat and how to get fluids if sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- When to call the doctor or go to the emergency room (ER), such as for fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or high blood glucose.

BUILD A SICK DAY KIT

Keep these supplies ready:

- Blood glucose testing supplies and backup batteries
- Seven-day supply of diabetes medications (rotate monthly)
  - Insulin (if prescribed) and needles/pen needles/pump supplies
- Glucose tabs/glucose gels
- Glucagon, if needed (ready-to-use glucagon is preferred)
- Doctor-approved OTC medications
- Drinks to stay hydrated
- Ketone test strips
- Thermometer and backup batteries
- Doctor's contact information and telehealth link

WHEN YOU FEEL SICK

- Keep taking diabetes medications as prescribed unless your doctor advises otherwise
- Stay hydrated and monitor blood glucose frequently
- Call your doctor or go to the ER if symptoms worsen
- If you are at the ER or seeing another doctor, inform them about your diabetes and give them a list of your medications

SICK DAY CHECKLIST

CHECK	GENERAL TARGETS/ACTION
✓ **Blood Glucose**	▪ 80–130 mg/dL fasting ▪ <180 mg/dL two hours after meals (or per doctor) ▪ Watch for lows and use the 15/15 rule of 15 grams fast-acting carbohydrates (carbs)/15 minutes to treat low blood glucose (less than 70 mg/dL)
✓ **Ketones**	Test every four to six hours if blood glucose >200 mg/dL
✓ **Fluids**	Alternate water and electrolyte drinks

After following your sick day plan, call your doctor or go to the ER if you experience:

- ▶ Vomiting or diarrhea for more than four hours
- ▶ Moderate to large ketones or fruity breath
- ▶ Fever above 101 degrees F (38.3 degrees C) lasting more than 24 hours
- ▶ Blood glucose above 300 mg/dL for two readings despite corrections
- ▶ Signs of dehydration (dizziness, dark urine)
- ▶ Uncertainty about medication doses while sick

This infographic is based on recommendations from the ADA's *Standards of Care in Diabetes—2026*