



COVID-19
AND CHILDREN WITH DIABETES
(AGE GROUP: BELOW 18 YEARS)



The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a public health emergency of international concern.

The majority of cases, more than 80%, are mild (flu-like symptoms) and people can recover at home. Some cases, around 15%, are severe and very few, around 5%, can result in critical illness.

People with diabetes are among those high-risk categories however, there are anecdotal reports that children with diabetes have not shown a different disease pattern compared to their peers. It is **reassuring** that children in general are less affected than adults.

BASIC PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR COVID-19



Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or clean with 60% alcohol-based hand rub



Maintain social distancing (2 meters or 6 feet)



Cough or sneeze into tissue or elbow



Avoid touching your face



Sanitize surfaces frequently



Leave the house for urgent matters and wear a mask (ages 2 years and above)

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF THE ILLNESS?

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---|
| Fever above 38°C | New or worsening chronic cough | Runny nose | Sore throat | Headache |
| New onset of fatigue | Loss of sense of taste or smell | Diarrhea | New onset of muscle pain | Purple markings on fingers & toes in children |

- **Breathing problems** occur when the infection affects the lungs and causes pneumonia.
- Symptoms usually start a few days after a person is infected with the virus, with most cases occurring approximately 3-7 days after exposure. In some people, it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear.

HOW TO CONTROL DIABETES DURING ILLNESS:

General sick day diabetes management principles (modified from ISPAD guidelines):



More frequent blood glucose and ketone (blood or urine) monitoring. Aim for a blood glucose level between 4 and 10 mmol/L (70-180 mg/dL) and blood ketones below 0.6 mmol/L when the child is ill.



NEVER STOP INSULIN:
If there is **FEVER**, insulin needs are usually higher.



Monitor and maintain hydration with adequate water / non sugary fluids balance.



Treat underlying illness and symptoms (such as fever).

URGENT SPECIALIST ADVICE WITH POSSIBLE REFERRAL TO EMERGENCY CARE MUST BE OBTAINED WHEN:

- Fever or vomiting persists and/or weight loss continues, suggesting worsening dehydration and potential circulatory compromise.
- Fruity breath odour (acetone) persists or worsens / blood ketones remain elevated >1.5 mmol/L or urine ketones remain large despite extra insulin and hydration.
- The child or adolescent is becoming exhausted, confused, hyperventilating (Kussmaul breathing), or has severe abdominal pain.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A CHANCE OF INFECTION:



Contact the Ministry of Health, Citizen Service Line on 151 and follow their instructions. It is essential that people affected and those that they have been in contact with are identified and isolated for a couple of weeks, to avoid further spread of the virus.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED:



Make sure you have all relevant contact details to hand in case you need them.



Pay extra attention to your glucose control. Regular monitoring can help avoid complications caused by high or low blood glucose.



If you do show flu-like symptoms (raised temperature, cough, difficulty breathing), it is important to consult a healthcare professional.



Any infection is going to raise your glucose levels and increase your need for fluids, so make sure you can access enough supply of water.



Make sure you have a good supply of the diabetes medications /blood glucose monitoring you need. Think what you would need if you had to quarantine yourself for a few weeks.



Make sure you have access to enough food.



Make sure you will be able to correct the situation if your blood glucose drops suddenly. Always keep glucagon injection available.



Check expiration date off all medication and keep it away from children.



Keep a regular schedule, avoiding overwork and having a good night's sleep.

Limit consumption of foods high in sugar, carbohydrates and fat



Give priority to foods with a low glycaemic index (e.g. vegetables, whole wheat pasta/noodles)

Avoid excessive consumption of fried foods

HEALTHY NUTRITION

It is important for people with diabetes to eat a varied and balanced diet to keep their blood glucose levels stable and enhance their immune system. It is recommended to:

Eat green, leafy vegetables

Choose lean proteins (eg. fish, meat, eggs, milk, fully cooked beans)

Eat fruits in two or three servings



Jump rope



Joint mobility and stretching exercises, yoga routines



Strength training



Treadmill and stationary bicycle

EXERCISE

This type of exercise can be started at age 7-8. Not to be confused with weightlifting, light resistance e.g. using their own body weight, and controlled activities are recommended.

(if available) one-hour brisk walking (no need to run), which can also be split into three 20-minute sessions

Adult supervision is important.

Examples of activities you can do at home:



Bicycle



Dancing



Climbing stairs



Make sure to avoid overload and adapt exercise intensity to individual ability and fitness level. It is also important to monitor your health before, during and after exercising.



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