



Bristol
Community
Health



What you need to know about diabetes, illness, insulin and infection

Diabetes and Nutrition Services



Helping you to live life well

What happens to me when I am ill?

When you are ill or you have an infection your blood sugars tend to go up. This can happen even if you cannot eat or are being sick. If your blood sugars remain high, the infection/illness could get worse, making you more unwell and possibly needing admission to hospital. Occasionally your blood sugars may go down, e.g. during morning sickness or travel sickness.

Never stop taking your insulin.

What sort of illness?

- the common cold or flu
- diarrhoea and vomiting
- urine or chest infections
- leg or foot ulcers
- other infections, for example tooth abscesses, boils, skin infections

Signs that the illness is affecting your diabetes include

- high blood glucose levels
- excessive thirst
- passing large amounts of urine, especially at night



Occasionally your blood sugars may go down, e.g. during morning sickness or travel sickness.

Never ignore the early warning signs.

Golden Rules

1. Never stop your insulin even if you cannot eat.
2. Test your blood sugars at least four times a day, before meals and at bed time.
3. Drink plenty of water or sugar free fluids.
4. Try to eat your normal diet. If you cannot, try nourishing foods that are easy to eat e.g. soups, milky drinks etc.
5. If you have Type 1 diabetes test your urine or blood for ketones if you are able.

When should I call for help?

- If your blood sugars stay above 17mmol/l for more than 24 hours.
- If you are vomiting.
- If you are worried or do not know what to do.
- If you have moderate or large amounts of ketones in your urine.

Main Points

- Never stop your insulin.
- Even if you are not eating, you may need more insulin.
- If in doubt contact your healthcare team.

Treatment advice

See advice for people with Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes A4 Sheet.

This leaflet is based on the 'How to manage your diabetes during illness, or when feeling unwell', from North Bristol NHS Trust and has been produced by the Diabetes Education programme for Bristol CCG, North Somerset CCG and South Gloucestershire CCG.

This leaflet has been produced by Diabetes & Nutrition Services on behalf of Bristol Community Health.

Bristol Community Health is the largest provider of NHS community health services in and around Bristol. Our 35 services range from community nursing teams and palliative care to prison healthcare and physiotherapy. Our mission is to deliver high quality care to patients in a person-centred way. We are a not-for-profit social enterprise owned by employee shareholders – all surpluses are reinvested back into services.

For more information, visit www.briscomhealth.org.uk.