

## COVID-19 & PEOPLE WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

March 2020

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DIABETES

We are keen to support you during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although people with diabetes are not more likely to catch Covid-19, the risks of becoming very unwell if you do get it are greater. As such, the government have recently recommended extreme social distancing measures for people living with diabetes. This is for a period of at least 12 weeks from the 16<sup>th</sup> of March on.

The full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

A summary of this guidance is below. People with diabetes fall into the 'vulnerable group with an underlying health condition' in the below table.

## Summary of advice

Group/ Action	Wash hands more often	Household isolation for 14 days*	Self - isolation for 7 days**	Social mixing in the community***	Having friends and family to the house	Use remote access to NHS and essential services	Vary daily commute and use less public transport	Home working
0 – 69	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advised against	Advised against	Advised	Advised	Advised
70+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
<b>Any age Member of vulnerable group with an underlying health condition<sup>1</sup></b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
<b>Pregnant women</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
<b>Those with serious underlying health conditions</b>	As above, but further bespoke guidance will be provided by your GP next week							

## **DIABETES UK INFORMATION**

More information on diabetes and Covid-19 and diabetes can be found on the Diabetes UK website at: [https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about\\_us/news/coronavirus](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/coronavirus)

## **BE PREPARED**

So that you have the equipment to cope during either self-isolation or illness please ensure you have adequate supplies of the following at home:

- Insulin
- Blood glucose monitoring and/or Libre
- Blood ketone sticks and a blood ketone monitor (we would also suggest requesting 50 urine ketones tests as back-up in case the blood ketones strips run low during a period of illness)

Due to pressure on services, we suggest you submit your repeat prescription request at least 1 week before the items will be needed. If you are on an insulin pump please ensure you have adequate consumables and a back-up supply of both long and short acting insulin and needles.

## **SICK DAY RULES**

Sick day rules can be found at: [http://trend-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/A5\\_T1Illness\\_TREND\\_FINAL.pdf](http://trend-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/A5_T1Illness_TREND_FINAL.pdf) and the content has been pasted below so you have easy access.

## **CONTACTING THE DERBY DIABETES TEAM**

We have established an **emergency** hot line for unwell people with diabetes manned by diabetes specialist nurses/consultants during normal working hours. If you are unwell and need support with increased insulin requirements during illness or diabetes sick day rules, please call this number.

**The emergency number to speak to the team is  
01332 787671  
We can also be contacted via email for less urgent enquires:  
[dhft.diabetesteam@nhs.net](mailto:dhft.diabetesteam@nhs.net)**

If you have a routine diabetes clinic appointment due soon this will be cancelled due to current pressures on the NHS. You will be contacted about your appointment in due course. For more urgent matters, the team can be contacted on the above number.

Best wishes,

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton Diabetes Team

# \*\*\*copy of Trend sick day rules follow\*\*\*

## > HOW DOES ILLNESS AFFECT YOUR BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS?

When you are ill, especially if you have an infection and high temperature, your body is less responsive to the insulin you inject. Insulin is a hormone which controls your blood glucose level. Being unwell therefore usually makes your blood glucose levels rise, even if you are eating less than usual.

You can also produce ketones when you are unwell. These are produced when the body is unable to use glucose for energy because your insulin injections are not working properly. If ketones accumulate in the blood, this can quickly lead to a serious condition called diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA).



It is possible to manage your diabetes effectively during illness, keep your blood glucose levels in or near to target, and prevent the development of ketones by following the simple advice given in this leaflet

## > LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- ✓ **Rest:** avoid strenuous exercise
- ✓ **Prevent dehydration** by drinking plenty of sugar-free fluids. Sip gently throughout the day (at least 2 ½ to 3 ½ litres or 4 to 6 pints in 24 hours)
- ✓ **Treat symptoms** such as a high temperature or a cough with basic over-the-counter medicines such as painkillers and cough syrups. These do not have to be sugar-free varieties as they contain very little glucose and are taken in small quantities. Ask your pharmacist for advice
- ✓ **See your GP** if you think you have an infection as you may need antibiotics
- ✓ **Monitor** your blood glucose at least 4 times daily while you are unwell. If your blood glucose is above 11 mmol/L, test your blood for ketones. If you do not have a meter that can do this, you should be able to get one from your diabetes team
- ✓ **Understanding your blood ketone levels:**
  - Less than 0.6 mmol/L is normal
  - 0.6 to 1.5 mmol/L means you may be at risk of developing DKA so test again after 2 hours
  - 1.6 to 2.9 mmol/L means you are at risk of DKA and should contact your diabetes team or GP as soon as possible
  - 3 mmol/L or higher means you have a very high risk of DKA and should get emergency help as soon as possible

If you are only able to do a urine ketone test, a result of 2+ means you are likely to develop DKA

You may need to adjust your insulin dose while you are ill, especially if your blood glucose level is high and you develop ketones

Seek urgent medical help if your readings remain higher than usual, or you feel very unwell and you are not sure what to do

➤ **MANAGING YOUR INSULIN DOSE WHEN YOUR BLOOD KETONES ARE LESS THAN 1.5 MMOL/L**

Blood glucose more than 11 mmol/L and either no ketones or blood ketones less than 1.5 mmol/L (negative or trace of urine ketones)

Sip sugar-free fluids, at least 100 ml/hr. Eat as normal if possible. If not, see meal replacement suggestions (page 6). **You need food containing carbohydrate (carbs), insulin and fluids to avoid dehydration and prevent diabetic ketoacidosis**

Test blood glucose and blood ketones **every 4 to 6 hours** including during the night

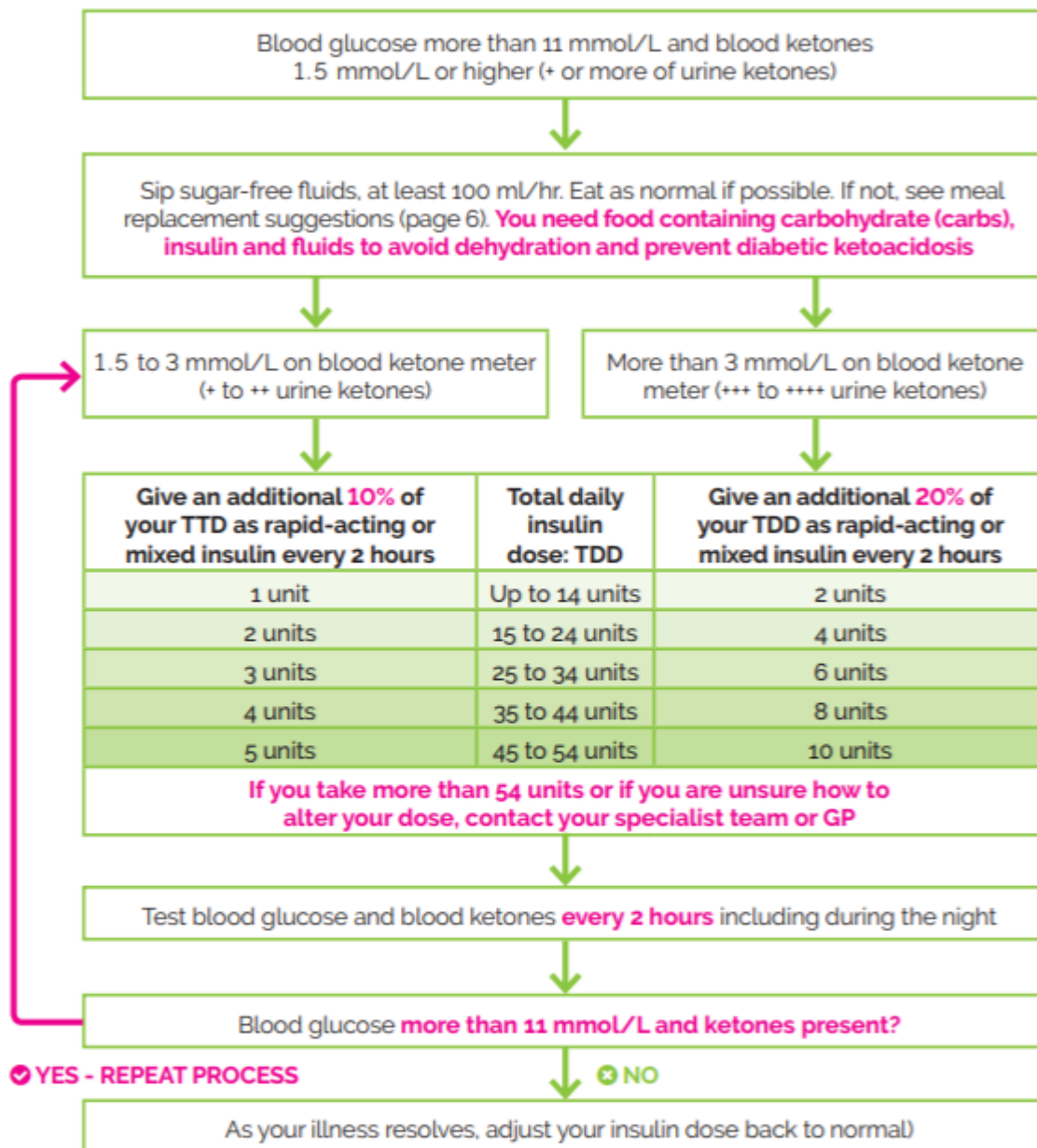
Aim to take your usual insulin dose. However, if your blood glucose is above 11 mmol/L, take additional insulin as below

Blood glucose	Insulin dose
11 – 17 mmol/L	Add 2 extra units to each dose
17 – 22 mmol/L	Add 4 extra units to each dose
More than 22 mmol/L	Add 6 extra units to each dose

**Call your GP or nurse if your blood glucose still remains higher than normal**

**⚠** If you start vomiting, are unable to keep fluids down, or are unable to control your blood glucose or ketone levels, you must seek urgent medical advice. **DON'T STOP TAKING YOUR INSULIN EVEN IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO EAT**

**> MANAGING YOUR INSULIN DOSE WHEN YOUR BLOOD KETONES ARE 1.5 MMOL/L OR HIGHER**



**⚠ If you start vomiting, are unable to keep fluids down, or are unable to control your blood glucose or ketone levels, you must seek urgent medical advice. DON'T STOP TAKING YOUR INSULIN EVEN IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO EAT**

## > WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND DRINK?

Your body uses a lot of energy when you are unwell, even if you are resting. Try to eat as normal but if you cannot manage your usual meals, replace these with light and easily digested foods such as soups and milky puddings. See the table below for a list of alternative food options. **Each portion is equal to approximately 10 gram carbohydrate** (e.g. an egg-size potato, a small slice of bread or a tablespoon of cooked rice or pasta):



Fruit juice  
100 ml



Milk  
200 ml



Plain vanilla ice-cream  
1 large scoop



Tomato soup  
200 gram (half a large tin)



Low fat yoghurt  
150 gram (1 small pot)



2 Rich tea or malted milk biscuits

## ➤ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Get to hospital urgently if any of these apply to you:

- ⚠ If you are pregnant and have ketones
- ⚠ If you vomit for the duration of 2 meals (i.e. 4 hours) and are unable to keep fluids down
- ⚠ If you have persistent ketones despite increasing your insulin
- ⚠ If you become drowsy and/or breathless
- ⚠ If you have acute abdominal pain
- ⚠ If your condition worsens despite following the advice given in this leaflet

If you need to go to hospital, remember to take a list of all your medications and insulin safety card with you

**⚠ Even if you are not eating, never stop your insulin**



## > BEING PREPARED:

- ❗ Make sure you always have plenty of insulin and blood glucose and ketone monitoring equipment available
- ❗ Make sure your ketone strips are still in date if you have not used them for a while
- ❗ Keep a few simple medicines such as painkillers and cough syrup in a safe place in the house
- ❗ Discuss how to manage your diabetes when you are unwell with your doctor or nurse so you know what to do if you become ill and know when to seek help



## > USEFUL RESOURCES:

TREND-UK website): [www.trend-uk.org](http://www.trend-uk.org)

Diabetes UK: [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

Diabetes UK: ☎ 0345 123 2399



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