

# High blood glucose in type 2 diabetes (hyperglycaemia)

The aim of diabetes treatment is to keep blood glucose levels as close to target as possible. People with diabetes balance their medication, food and exercise to achieve blood glucose targets. Sometimes blood glucose levels can go out of a healthy range. High blood glucose is when levels are over 8mmol/L before meals, over 10mmol/L after meals or the HbA1c is above 7% (53mmol/mol).

## Am I at risk of high blood glucose?

Yes. High blood glucose levels can occur in any person with diabetes.

## What causes high blood glucose?

- > not enough medication (tablets or insulin). Over time all people with type 2 diabetes require more medication to reach target blood glucose levels. This is the natural progression of the condition
- > not taking diabetes medication/insulin
- > changes in eating eg too much carbohydrate at one sitting or eating foods high in quickly digested carbohydrates
- > decreases in exercise or increasing weight
- > illness, infection or surgery
- > some medications eg cortisone
- > in some people emotional stress can affect blood glucose levels.

## How will I know if I have high blood glucose?

Symptoms may include thirst, tiredness, lack of energy, passing lots of urine, especially at night, weight loss or blurred vision. In very severe cases, this may progress to drowsiness or coma. Many people do not get any symptoms until levels are above 15mmol/L. However, if levels remain above 8mmol/L this can cause damage over time.

Note: one-off high readings are expected and should not cause long term problems.

## What should I do if I have high blood glucose?

1. Check you are taking your insulin/medication at the correct dose and time.
2. Test your blood glucose levels more often to see if the high reading was a one-off or not.
3. Your diet may need to be reviewed.
4. See your doctor if your blood glucose levels are not in the target range even if you do not have any symptoms. Your medication may need to be changed or increased.
5. If you are unwell (fever, infection, vomiting) or your blood glucose is greater than 15mmol/L for 8-12hrs or more, even if you are feeling ok start your sick day action plan. If you do not have an action plan (see next page) contact your diabetes service or doctor for further advice.



## Sick Day Action Plan

### Why have a plan for sick days?

When you are sick or your blood glucose is high you will need extra care to keep your diabetes on track.

This checklist will help you plan for those times when you are sick or your blood glucose is high.

Work through it with your doctor or diabetes educator to help plan what you can do when unwell.

Common illnesses such as coughs and colds, the flu or a stomach upset can cause blood glucose levels to go up or down.

Questions to ask yourself and your health professionals.

Do I know:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. When I should start my sick day plan             | YES / NO |
| 2. Whom to tell when I am sick                      | YES / NO |
| 3. What to do with my blood glucose results         | YES / NO |
| 4. What to do with my medications                   | YES / NO |
| 5. What to do with my insulin                       | YES / NO |
| 6. What to eat/drink when I can't eat my usual food | YES / NO |
| 7. When I should go to the doctor or hospital       | YES / NO |
| 8. What should be in my sick day kit                | YES / NO |

To help you update or review your sick day plan use the information inside this factsheet.

## Suggestions for your plan

1. Start your sick day plan immediately if:
  - > you feel unwell, have signs of illness (fever, upset stomach, cough)
  - > your blood glucose is greater than 15mmol/L for 8-12hrs or more, even if you are feeling ok.
2. Contacts
  - > if you are sick and home alone, phone and tell someone
  - > you may need to consult your doctor.
3. Blood glucose testing
  - > test before meals and at bedtime
  - > test at any time you are concerned about your blood glucose levels
  - > if you are at risk of low blood glucose, and your blood glucose goes below 4, treat as for your Hypo Action Plan.
4. Continue to take your medications, EXCEPT you may need to stop your metformin if you are not eating, feel sick (nauseous), are vomiting and/or have diarrhoea.  
**Consult your doctor.**
5. If you use insulin, you may need extra insulin. Consult your doctor or diabetes educator.
6. Have a list of alternate foods and drinks you can use.
  - > ½ to 1 cup of fluid (125-250ml) every hour to avoid dehydration
  - > if you can't eat – replace food with:
    - > sweetened fluids if your blood glucose is under 15 (eg soft drinks, juice, ordinary jelly)
    - > sugar-free fluids if your blood glucose is over 15 (eg diet cordial, diet jelly, diet ice blocks)
  - > Gastrolyte can help replenish fluids lost because of vomiting or diarrhoea.
7. Contact your doctor or go to the hospital if:
  - > your blood glucose is more than 15 for more than 24 hours
  - > you feel drowsy, confused, have difficulty breathing or severe abdominal pain
  - > you are vomiting for more than 2-4 hours
  - > you are unable to eat or drink
  - > you can't keep your blood glucose above 4
  - > you feel too sick to stay at home.
8. A sick day kit should include (but is not limited to):
  - > a copy of your sick day action plan
  - > a thermometer
  - > telephone numbers (support person, doctor, diabetes educator, hospital)
  - > in-date blood glucose strips and spare record book
  - > a copy of your hypo action plan
  - > glucose jelly beans, glucose gel, glucose drink
  - > paracetamol for pain relief and fever treatment
  - > list of foods and fluids you can have if you can't eat your usual food
  - > extra insulin (store backup supply in fridge) and extra syringes.

## My sick day plan

Contact details.	1. _____ 2. _____ Doctor: _____ Diabetes educator: _____ Health Direct (24hr health advice line) ph 1800 022 222
Instructions for blood glucose monitoring.	
Hypo action plan.	
Instructions for diabetes medications.	
Instructions for insulin adjustment.	
Instructions for types of fluids and food.	
When to seek medical care.	
Sick day kit.	
Other.	
Date.	

### For more information

**Diabetes Outreach  
Country Health SA**  
8 Woodville Rd  
Woodville South SA 5011  
Telephone: (08) 8222 6775  
[www.diabetesoutreach.org.au](http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au)

