



**GREENWICH
HOSPITAL**

YALE NEW HAVEN HEALTH

DIABETES: BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL ON “SICK DAYS”

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is meant by “sick days?”

A “sick day” is any time that an infection or other physical stress on the body is present. This could include a common cold, a gum infection, a stomach virus, a urinary tract infection or a foot infection. The stress of surgery or a broken bone can also be considered “sick days.” **Before you become ill**, you should discuss your plan to handle “sick days” with your physician.

How is blood sugar control affected by “sick days?”

Usually, blood sugar levels rise during an illness. As a result, you may require an increase in the diabetes medication you normally take. This is true, even if you are eating less food than you normally do. Careful, regular monitoring of your blood sugar level will help you and your physician determine how much medication you need.

How do I know if my blood sugar is high when I am sick?

Blood sugar needs to be measured using a glucose meter. Your doctor may instruct you to check your blood sugar more often than usual. Checking blood sugar levels every 4 to 6 hours is not uncommon. If you are on intensive insulin therapy (that is, several injections of insulin each day or on an insulin pump), you may need to check your blood sugar every 2 to 4 hours.

What should I do if my blood sugar readings are high?

Generally, if your blood sugar reading is more than 250 mg/dl for two checks in a row you should call your doctor. If you have type 1 diabetes and your urine ketones measure “small” or greater, you must call your doctor. Your doctor will make recommendations to control your blood sugar during your illness.

Should I take my medicine even if I am unable to eat?

Never stop taking medication for diabetes unless your doctor instructs you to do so. Stopping diabetes medications when you are sick can lead to a rapid rise in blood sugar levels that could require hospitalization.

What should I do if I can’t eat my regular meals?

- Keep well hydrated. Drink at least 8 ounces of water or other calorie-free, caffeine-free beverage every hour.
- Try eating lighter foods to provide calories and carbohydrates similar to your usual meal plan.
- If you are unable to keep down solid foods, drink liquids providing about 50 grams of carbohydrate every 3 – 4 hours.



Lighter foods for sick days:

Food	Portion	Grams of Carbohydrate
Crackers, soda	4 – 6	15
Cereal, cooked	½ cup	15
Soup	1 cup	15 – 20
Fruit juice	½ cup	15
Soda, regular	¾ cup	15
Gelatin, regular	½ cup	20
Popsicles	1	24
Pudding, regular	½ cup	30
Sherbet	½ cup	30
Ice cream	½ cup	15
Broth	1 cup	-
Milk	1 cup	12
Pudding, sugar-free	½ cup	15
Yogurt, plain, artificially sweetened or light	1 cup	17
Yogurt, fruit flavored	1 cup	40 – 60

Adapted from: Type 2 Diabetes. A Curriculum for Patients and Health Professionals. American Diabetic Association, 2002.

When do I need to call my physician?

In the course of your illness, call your physician if you experience any of the following:

- You feel too sick to eat normally and are unable to keep food down for more than 6 hours.
- You are having severe diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You lose 5 pounds or more.
- Your temperature is over 101.5 degrees F or rising for more than 24 hours.
- Your blood glucose is lower than 60 mg/dl or remains over 250 mg/dl.
- You have small or greater ketones in your urine.
- You have trouble breathing.
- **If you feel sleepy or cannot think clearly, have someone call your doctor or call 911.**

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenwichhospital.org and click on Patient Education



**GREENWICH
HOSPITAL**

YALE NEW HAVEN HEALTH

DIABETES: RECORD FOR SICK DAYS

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Date: _____

HOW OFTEN	QUESTION	ANSWER					
Every Day	How much do you weigh today?	I weigh _____ pounds					
Every morning and evening	What is your temperature?	_____ AM			_____ PM		
Every 4 hours (or before each meal)	How much diabetes medication did you take?	Time/Dose:					
Every 4 hours (or each time you pass urine)	What is your blood glucose level?	Time/Level:					
	What is your urine ketone level?	Time/Ketones:					
Every 4 to 6 hours	How is your breathing?	Time/Condition:					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G=Good; no shortness of breath • E=Short of breath with exertion • R=Short of breath at rest 					