

Managing Diabetes during Illness

Children with diabetes can develop the same illnesses as any other child of their age, but having colds, tummy upsets and other infections can make their diabetes more difficult to manage.

How Illness Affects Your Child's Blood Glucose Levels

Illnesses that may result in your child having a high temperature such as colds, tonsillitis and ear infections tend to cause the blood glucose level to rise causing hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose levels). Illnesses associated with vomiting and diarrhoea, such as 'tummy bugs' (gastroenteritis) may result in a fall in the blood glucose level causing hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels). Whichever type of illness your child has, follow the steps listed below to help you manage your child's diabetes during this time.

Step 1 – Insulin

Your child must always have their insulin. Insulin injections must never be missed. Your child may require an alteration in their insulin dose during illness. This will depend on their blood glucose levels and whether or not they have ketones in their urine or blood. Follow the guidelines on 'How to Use Fast Acting Insulin' to help you decide on the action to take.

Step 2 – Blood Glucose Monitoring

During times of illness your child's blood glucose level must **be** measured at least 4 hourly as this will help you to decide on any changes that you may need to make to their insulin dose.

Step 3 – Ketone Testing

When your child is unwell or if their blood glucose level is over 15mmols/l test their urine or blood to see if there are any ketones present. During illness test at least twice daily for ketones and if they are present follow the guidelines on 'How to Use Fast Acting Insulin' to help you decide on the action to take.

Step 4 – Diet

Your child must continue to have an adequate intake of carbohydrate. If they do not want to eat their normal meals and snacks then these must be substituted for sweet drinks such as fruit juice, milkshakes and Lucozade, given in small but very regular quantities throughout the day. Water or sugar-free drinks should also be given in adequate quantities to ensure they remain well hydrated.

If Your Child Is Vomiting

Your child must still have their insulin injections and maintain their carbohydrate intake (follow step 4). If they vomit more than twice and are not tolerating sugary drinks you must contact the hospital straight away whatever time of day or night it is.

Supplies you should always have at home:

Remember to check that they are still in date for use!

- * Fast acting insulin
- * GlucolGel (Hypostop)
- * Ketone testing sticks
- * Glucagon

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References:

- Consensus Guidelines 2009, International Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Diabetes. Paediatric Diabetes 2009: 10 146-153
- Sick day Rules in Diabetes, A Alston, 2013
- Hanas R (2007) Type 1 Diabetes in Children, Adolescents and Young Adults. Class Publishing

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