



International Diabetes Federation

South & Central America
Task Force
Diabetes & Disasters

TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

9 tips for people with diabetes

- **Don't throw your insulin away.**

An ampoule opened at room temperature has bioavailability (bioavailability refers to the fraction of an administered drug that reaches the blood), up to 30 days later, if there is no way to refrigerate it, keeping it out of the sun and keeping it in a cool and safe place is enough.

- **Hydrate yourself well.**

Ensure fluid intake, at least one and a half liters per day.

- **Don't walk barefoot.**

Protect your feet; they are as important as your hands, be careful not to cut or lacerate them, it is essential to prevent injuries.

- **Avoid overexposure to the sun.**

Burns on sensitive skin are more common in the case of people living with diabetes and this generates more dehydration.

- **Use the same syringe and lancet.**

Some studies indicate that the same insulin syringe can be used over 100 times, with the respective care and if it does not cause pain when entering the skin. Syringes should not be shared with other individuals to avoid infections. Personal lancets for blood glucose or ketone testing can also be reused in case of emergency, but not shared.

- **Do not fast.**

Fasting as a measure to keep your blood sugar down is not effective, it can cause more harm than good, you must eat to nourish yourself.

- **Optimize glucose controls.**

If you have a glucometer.

- **Communicate your condition.**

Inform a health post that you are a person living with diabetes, even more so if you are an insulin user, they will know how to guide you.

- **Seek care.**

If you have a wound, seek attention, it is a priority to clean it and avoid infection immediately.



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Backpack always ready and at hand!

With everything you need to cope in the best way with your health condition until you receive help.

Medical Information - List of medications used.

- Notebook to record the results of blood sugar tests, insulin(s) and oral antidiabetic pills, antihypertensive pills, prophylactic aspirin, cholesterol control agents and other medications used on a regular basis for at least 2 weeks.
- Syringes and needles.
- Needles for the devices, in case of using pre-filled insulin pens for at least 2 weeks.
- Insulin infuser supplies (insulin pump prescription stock or insulin cartridges, infusion set, insertion devices, batteries for infusion pump and remote, antiseptic cleaner, glue).
- Cotton gauze pads with alcohol.
- A blood sugar meter (glucometer).
- Strips to use with the glucometer (between 90 and 200 strips for 10 - 20 days)
Lancets and device for its use.
- Strips to measure ketone bodies in urine (between 25 and 50 strips for 10 - 20 days) according to medical indication.
- Glucose tablets or sugar sachets for low blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia).
- Cans of sugary soda or juice, soft candy, for hypoglycemia.
- A glucagon "kit".
- A container in which to dispose of used sharps (syringes, lancets).
- A sturdy container with a lid to discard sharps such as needles and lancets and labeled: Handle with care, contains contaminated/used sharps.
- Medications for nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- A tube of antibiotic/antimicrobial ointment.
- Insulation bag or cooler for insulin(s), in case of power failure in hot weather or hot climates.



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Backpack always ready and at hand!

With everything you need to best cope with your health condition until help arrives.

- During disasters, it can be difficult to manage diabetes, especially because medical supplies may be missing.
- To prevent this situation, prepare a backpack with a plastic bag in which you can store everything you need.
- The backpack should be stored in a dry, accessible area and should contain everything you need to manage your diabetes for 10-20 days.
- It is important to get what you need before you become aware of any danger that will lead to a sudden departure from your home if you need to be evacuated.
- It is wise to review the entire contents of your emergency backpack every 2 to 3 months. Items that have reached their expiration date should be replaced.





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Tips for safe water

It is very important:

- Have at least one and a half liters of safe water ready to carry in case you must be evacuated.
- Have chlorinated tablets or liquids for water sanitization.
- The most economical product is one that contains chlorinated substances. (4 milligram tablets or liquids of different concentrations).

Chlorine tablets

Dosage: Use one tablet (4 mg) per liter of water, stir them and wait 10 minutes to use. Keep it in a closed container.

Chlorine Legia

Chlorine concentration 1 %.

- 10 drops per liter of clean water. 20 drops per liter of dirty water.
- Chlorine concentration 4-6 %.
- 2 drops per liter of clean water. 4 drops per liter of dirty water.

Chlorine concentration 7-10 %.

- 1 drops per liter of clean water.
- 2 drops per liter of dirty water.

If the concentration is unknown, use 10 drops per liter.

If safe water and water sanitizers are not available, if possible, alternatively boil the water before consumption.



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Hand hygiene tips

- Hand washing saves lives!!! In times of disasters or emergencies, hand washing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting sick.
- Hand washing can help keep people living with diabetes healthy, and prevent the spread of respiratory and diarrheal infections from one person to another.

Germs can spread from person to person, or from surfaces when:

- You touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- You cook or consume food or drink with unwashed hands.
- Touching a contaminated surface or object.
- You blow your nose or cover your nose and mouth with your hands when you cough or sneeze and then touch someone else's hands or touch commonly used objects.

How to wash hands properly?

- **Wet:** Wet hands up to the level of the forearms with clean running water (not stagnant or previously used) to lather them after turning off the faucet.
- **Lather:** Wash hands with soap and water. Washing with water alone is useless. In these cases, any type of hand soap is useful.
- Prefer liquid dispenser soaps.
- Rub into a lather and continue to rub for at least 20 seconds the entire surface of your hand including the fingers, between them, the knuckles, and a portion of your forearm. It is important to wash our fingertips as well.
- **Rinse:** Remove the soap with clean, running water.
- Preferably, if you are not at home, dry your hands with paper towels to avoid contact with cloth towels that have been used by someone else.
- If soap is not available, antibacterial gel is an alternative. The recommendation is to choose an antibacterial gel that contains at least 60% alcohol so that it is more likely to eliminate viruses and bacteria that could lead to an infectious disease.
- Rub your hands against each other until they feel dry, this will take about 20 seconds until your hands are dry.



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Heat stroke: What are the main symptoms and how to avoid it?

Heat stroke is a disorder caused by excess heat in the body, usually as a result of prolonged exposure to high temperatures or physical exertion in high temperatures.

Symptoms

Excessive sweating at first; then lack of sweating. The skin begins to show signs of redness and dryness. The body temperature begins to rise until it becomes a fever above 39 degrees. Later, stronger symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, headache, and confusion, palpitations appear.

Signs of increased concern may follow:

- Shortness of breath to breathe
- Inappropriate behavior-such as removing clothing regardless of location and loss of consciousness and seizures.

How to prevent heat stroke?

- Avoid sunbathing between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., when the heat is at its highest intensity; as well as intense physical activities under the sun.
- Wear light clothes, long sleeves and light colors, stay in the shade and cool places, use sunglasses, cap, hat or umbrella.
- Stay hydrated, eat fresh food, fruits and vegetables, and avoid alcoholic beverages.
- Pay special attention to these recommendations for adults over 65 and children under 5 years old.

What to do in case of heat stroke?

- If a person shows symptoms of heat stroke, he/she should be taken to a cool place, take off his/her clothes, put cool, damp cloths on his/her forehead, abdomen, and armpits.
- Subsequently, try to give her a cool water bath and, if possible, use fans and/or air conditioning to cool her down.
- The last option, if necessary, is to transport the person urgently to a nearby hospital.



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Prevention and treatment of hyperglycemia

What is hyperglycemia?

Hyperglycemia occurs when you have high blood sugar levels. It occurs when your body does not have enough insulin or cannot use insulin properly. High blood sugar means that your blood sugar level is higher than your target level. If that is sustained over time, it can cause serious long-term health problems.

What are the causes?

- Abandonment of drug treatment (insulin or tablets).
Incomplete compliance with drug treatment.
- Use of insulins that have deteriorated due to poor storage conditions. Excessive food intake, with respect to the indicated dietary plan.
- Decrease of the indicated physical activity.
- Infections or traumatism.
- Failure to monitor blood glucose levels or to make the indicated insulin corrections.
- Stress, in disaster situations, due to forced displacement, personal and material losses, separation of families, interpersonal conflicts.

How can we suspect hyperglycemia?

Extreme thirst, increased appetite, frequent urination. When hyperglycemia is not treated in time, it can also appear:

- Reddening of the skin.
- Difficulty breathing
- Breath with fruity odor
- Nausea and vomiting
- Very dry mouth
- Loss of consciousness.

How can hyperglycemia be prevented?

The best option is to take good management of your diabetes, and to follow or stick with your drug treatment, dietary plan, physical activity, and the frequency of glucose monitoring that has been indicated.

It is important to detect and treat hyperglycemia early, before it gets worse. If any of these symptoms occur, you should consult your health care team without delay.



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What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, is one of the problems that require immediate treatment with rapid detection and resolution. All people with diabetes have hypoglycemia occasionally. It is usually associated with the treatment itself, for example those who use insulin.

What are the symptoms of hypoglycemia?

Symptoms of hypoglycemia include:

- Tremors
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Hunger
- Headache
- Paleness
- Sudden irritability or behavioral changes
- Clumsy movements
- Seizures
- Difficulty paying attention, or confusion.
- Tingling sensation around the mouth

Some people have no symptoms at all in hypoglycemia. They may become unconscious without even noticing that their blood sugar levels were dropping. That problem is called "hypoglycemia unawareness". It usually happens to those who have type 1 diabetes for many years, and it is not something that happens to everyone.

Most frequent causes

Errors in insulin therapy:

- Application in inadequate place.
- Using an inadequate syringe with a graduation different from the content of the insulin vial.
- Failure to homogenize well by moving the insulin container before application.
- Confusing insulin doses.
- Confusing the types of insulin.
- Poor reading of test strips and consequent inadequate correction.
- Inadequate correction time.
- Personal beliefs of insulin therapy.

Errors in the dietary plan:

- Insufficient intake. Spacing or omitting meals.
- Usual food plan, with physical activity with unusual increase.
- Alcohol intoxication.



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How do we treat hypoglycemia?

- If you feel a reaction coming on, but you can't measure your blood sugar level, it is wise to treat the reaction rather than wait.
- Remember this simple rule: When in doubt (if we don't know whether blood glucose levels are high or low) ---GIVE SUGAR!!!
- If the person is conscious: The quickest way to raise blood sugar and treat hypoglycemia is with some kind of sugar.

For example:

- 3 glucose tablets,
- 1/2 cup of fruit juice
- 3 lumps or 3 heaping teaspoons of sugar.
- 2 glucose candies with an interval of 15 minutes.

**Honey: one
spoonful**



Juice: 150ml



**Sweetened
beverage: 150ml**



Sugar: 15 grams



If the person is unconscious:

Never attempt to give a drink or food to an unconscious person, as there is a risk that the contents will be diverted and obstruct air intake. Apply glucagon with a pre-filled syringe (if you have the kit and adequate training).

Place it on its side, you can rub sugar or honey in the space between the oral mucosa and the gum.

To keep in mind:

- Someone in our environment should know that you have diabetes and how to suspect and act in case of hypoglycemia.
- Always carry a bracelet, pendant or card among your personal documentation indicating that you have diabetes. When you're unable to speak or communicate effectively (due to unconsciousness, confusion, or other reasons), the bracelet or pendant acts as a silent communicator. It alerts others that you have diabetes and need specific care.



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Food and nutritional safety -emergency plate

25% Carbohydrates or starches: rice, oats, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, breads, cookies, cereals, pastas, packaged foods.



25% Protein: fresh, frozen or canned chicken or tuna, egg, cheese, canned fat-free milk, grains, ham, peanuts or almonds.



50% spinach, carrots, peas, beans, onion, cucumber, lettuce, corn.



Natural drinking water, rehydration or sugar-free energy drinks.

Fruits: bananas, oranges, raisins, dates, or fruits

- Vegetables
- Proteins
- Fruits and drinks
- Cereals and starches

Food Provisions in Disaster Situations for People with Diabetes

It may be difficult to obtain adequate food during the turmoil following a natural disaster. It is preferable to keep the following foods in reserve, in a dry and accessible place.

- Large, sealed box of crackers.
- Large jar of peanut butter.
- Medium box of powdered milk or several tetrapaks of ultra-pasteurized milk that do not need refrigeration.
- 4 liters of water per person per day, enough for at least 10 days.
- Large jar of soft processed cheese (such as Velveeta).
- Package of unsweetened dry cereal (raw oatmeal, for example)
- Cans of sugar-free, caffeine-free soda.
- Cans of 100% pure fruit juice or sports drink.

Remember:

- Limited access to refrigeration for heat-sensitive medications and food and major changes in diet, due to limited availability of shelf-stable foods, are likely to make diabetes management even worse.
- Although there is no such thing as a "diabetes diet," good nutrition helps you manage your diabetes.
- If you have to be displaced, communicate that you have diabetes. If you remain in your environment in times of emergencies and disasters, try to stay hydrated and eat according to the diabetes emergency plate guide.



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Tips for mood problems

You may feel:

Distress, fear, confusion, agitation, anxiety, worry, anger, indifference, paralysis, irritability, insomnia, lack / excess appetite, loneliness, grief, frustration and other emotions that are uncommon for you.

Start by:

- Seek help if necessary.
- Bring identification of mental conditions, medication you take and notify health professionals who are treating you.

What to do?

- Try to get back to your normal life. Start by drinking water regularly. Get plenty of rest.
- Clean yourself whenever possible.
- Be physically active according to your doctor's recommendations as soon as possible.
- Get in touch with your loved ones.
- Link yourself to a support network that is offered to you.
- Try recreational and relaxation activities (singing, praying, painting, knitting). Provide help to others in a way that is safe for you.

What should you avoid?

- Alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.
- Isolating yourself.
- Taking information from unreliable sources.