

Type 1 diabetes and COVID-19: Information for parents



As Canadians take steps to keep themselves safe from coronavirus and COVID-19, parents of children with type 1 diabetes have many questions. Remember:

- **Risk:** The risk of getting COVID-19 and developing complications is **NOT increased** for children with type 1 diabetes.
- **Information:** Your diabetes team has likely sent information about appointments, how to reach them, and what to do if you have concerns. If you have not received this information, contact them.
- **Managing illness:** Be sure to have your SICK DAY guidelines on hand—including how to check for and correct ketones and when/how to use mini doses of glucagon. This information will help you manage diabetes during any illness.
- **Insulin and supplies:** Ensure your child’s prescriptions for diabetes supplies are up-to-date. Most pharmacists are currently dispensing a 30-day supply, to ensure that everyone has what they need. This does not mean that there are shortages.
- **Seeking care:** Although most appointments are “virtual”, you still have phone access to your child’s diabetes team (see **Information**, above). If you are struggling with high blood sugars and ketones, **get in touch with your team.**

Do what you can to prevent your family members from contracting coronavirus. Follow the advice of the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and your local public health authorities.

Are children with type 1 diabetes at higher risk of contracting coronavirus?

You may have heard that people with diabetes are at higher risk of developing complications from coronavirus. This is based on information about adults with type 2 diabetes and **not** patients with type 1 diabetes. While we lack specific evidence about T1D and COVID-19, leading medical experts say that children with well-managed type 1 diabetes are **NOT** at increased risk of contracting coronavirus disease (COVID-19) or developing serious complications from it.

Will having coronavirus affect my diabetes management?

Having any virus or illness can affect blood sugar levels in people with type 1 diabetes. Since the chance of high blood sugar and ketones are higher when your child is ill, make sure you are familiar with [sick day guidelines](#). In particular, know:

- How to check for and correct **ketones** (which can develop with [high blood sugar](#)).
- How and when to use mini doses of **glucagon** (for children with [low blood sugar](#) who are vomiting can cannot take fast-acting sugar).

Since anyone with viral symptoms must stay quarantined for 14 days, be sure to have a supply of prescriptions and diabetes medications at home.

How can I prevent DKA?

DKA (diabetic ketoacidosis) is a serious complication of diabetes caused by not having enough insulin. Symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, high blood sugar and ketones (which cause fruity-smelling breath). Without treatment, DKA can be life threatening.

Here are some things you can do to prevent DKA:

- Check your child's blood sugar frequently, especially if they are showing signs of illness.
- Have ketone testing supplies on hand, either urine strips or a blood-ketone meter and appropriate strips.
- If your child is on a pump, make sure you have either syringes or an insulin pen on hand, in case you need to give fast-acting insulin by injection.
- Have a supply of basal (long-acting) insulin on hand in case your child's pump malfunctions.
- If your child is sick and/or has ketones, follow your clinic's sick day guidelines.
- Seek help from your team as directed.

If your child is showing signs of DKA, you need to seek medical attention **immediately**.

For more information

- JDRF Canada: [Type 1 Diabetes and Coronavirus](#)
- Beyond Type 1: [Cold and flu and what to do](#)
- BC Children's Hospital: [Managing sick days and preventing ketoacidosis](#)
- Diabetes Canada: [FAQ about COVID and diabetes](#)
- Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health: [Illness management guidelines](#)
- Diabetes at School: [Video series](#)

Adapted from information developed by the diabetes teams at BC Children's Hospital and the Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

Created April 2020. For more information on COVID-19 and kids, visit www.cps.ca