

Type 2 Diabetes Management and COVID-19

We would like to acknowledge the challenges in delivery of healthcare during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. People with diabetes do not necessarily have higher infection rates with COVID-19 however a higher proportion experience significant COVID-19 complications. This time may also be associated with increased anxiety, not just in the general community, but also in relation to your diabetes and its management. As such, we are reaching out to address some of the issues of relevance to your diabetes during this time. This is based on the best advice available to date, but of course is subject to change on a daily basis.

Medication supply

There is no shortage of diabetes medications, including insulin, in Australia.

Unfortunately there have been temporary localized **supply** issues of diabetes medications, including insulin, at some pharmacies due to increased demand. However, the government body overseeing medication in Australia have not received notifications of medicine shortages in diabetes medications including insulin. We do not recommend panic buying/ stockpiling of medication, and pharmacists are limited to dispensing 1 month's supply of medication. This limit is being enforced.

The Australian Diabetes Society has recommended that, if you are on insulin, in addition to your current supply of medication, people with diabetes have on hand one full script of insulin (i.e. 5 x 5 x 3ml = 7500 units). This is adequate supply for most people with diabetes.

Lancets, testing strips, and ketone strips

Unfortunately there have been some issues with accessing lancets, testing strips and ketone strips due to stockpiling, although it is anticipated normal supply will be reestablished as there is no issue with the supply chain. Again, it is recommended that you continue ordering these as per usual, and do not stockpile.

Use of antihypertensive (blood pressure) medications

There has been media coverage suggesting that certain blood pressure lowering medications which are commonly used in diabetes, ACE inhibitors and Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), may have an impact on COVID-19 infection. At this stage, evidence on this is far from conclusive and the medical community in general is recommending that usual blood pressure medications are continued.

SGLT 2 inhibitors (Empagliflozin (Jardiance), Dapagliflozin (Forxiga), Ertugliflozin (Steglatro), Jardiamet, Xigduo, and others)

It is most important to remember to cease this class of medication (SGLT2 inhibitors) during intercurrent illness, including coronavirus infection, to minimise the risk of dehydration and the rare complication of

diabetic ketoacidosis. Please refer to the patient information handout you will have received on initiation of this medication. People who have been taking SGLT2 inhibitors should also have ready access to ketone testing strips if they become unwell given their increased risk for diabetic ketoacidosis.

Sick Day Management

All individuals with diabetes should be aware of sick day management guidelines. Checking blood glucose levels frequently whilst unwell is of the utmost importance. Please see the attached link for advice:

<https://www.ndss.com.au/about-diabetes/resources/find-a-resource/managing-sick-days-for-type-2-diabetes-fact-sheet/>

If you are unaware of sick day management, please contact us for further advice.

Occupational issues for people with diabetes

People with diabetes do not necessarily have higher infection rates with coronavirus however a higher proportion experience significant COVID-19 complications. Given the increased risk of complications with COVID-19, the safety of people with diabetes should be a priority. Measures at the workplace should be encouraged to minimise the risk of being exposed to coronavirus and should include the following:

- Making sure workplaces are clean and hygienic
- Promoting regular and thorough hand-washing by staff
- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace
- Communicating and promoting the message that people need to stay at home even if they have just mild respiratory or flu-like symptoms.
- Consider people with diabetes work from home where feasible

<http://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>

We are endeavouring to continue to provide appointments when needed, which can now be conducted over the telephone/ telehealth (bulk-billed by Medicare). Many of you will receive phone calls to check on your diabetes management during this time. Please contact us on (03) 9459 4415 should you require anything related to your diabetes.