



COVID-19 + Type 1 Diabetes

What You Need to Know to Stay Healthy and Safe

Worried about COVID-19 and type 1 diabetes (T1D)? First of all: don't panic. Secondly: get informed. Here is the latest information and recommendations for people with T1D, from the experts based on current understanding of a new disease.

A couple of things to keep in mind:

- Having T1D does NOT make you more susceptible to contracting COVID-19.
- Those at the greatest risk are people with consistently elevated blood-sugar levels and those with a second comorbidity, such as obesity or heart, kidney or lung disease. High fasting blood glucose level is an independent risk factor for worsening of outcomes when infected with COVID-19.
- Feeling sick? It is crucial to carefully monitor your blood glucose and ketones more often than usual, as often as every four hours.
- Many over-the-counter medications also affect blood glucose levels. Check jdrf.org/coronavirus to see if your medication is on the list.

What are the symptoms?

For people with T1D, according to the preliminary findings from the T1D Exchange, the most prevalent presenting symptom was high blood sugar, followed by elevated temperature, dry cough, excess fatigue, vomiting, shortness of breath, nausea and body/headaches.

Very high levels of ketones could lead to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), a dangerous condition that demands immediate medical attention, and can be fatal if left untreated. Be aware of any signs that DKA is occurring, such as flu-like symptoms, dehydration and a fruity smell on the breath, with more rapid breathing.

What should I do to protect myself and others?

The World Health Organization (WHO) posted key recommendations for preventing the spread of COVID-19, including: wearing a mask when in public; maintaining at least a 6 feet distance between yourself and others; washing your hands often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub; do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; and staying at home when you are sick.

What should I stock up on?

You should make sure your medical supplies are up-to-date, and you have access to refills in the event that you are quarantined. You should also stock your cabinets with items that will help you keep up your carbohydrate and fluid intake in a healthy way. Foods like crackers, vegetable or noodle soups, unsweetened applesauce or fruit-flavored yogurt are all easy-on-the-stomach selections.

When should I go to the hospital?

If you are worried that you or someone you know may be showing signs of DKA, seek help. Do not wait. If left untreated, DKA can lead to death. For COVID-19, physicians urge you to seek help if you have trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or have bluish lips or face.

Please note that the risk of dying in the hospital from COVID-19 among people with T1D is very low, however, one study found that this risk is higher for people with T1D (3.5 times higher) compared to people without diabetes. So be vigilant about keeping your blood-sugar levels in a normal range.

If you end up at the emergency room, for whatever reason, it is vital that you mention that you or your loved one has T1D, and have an ID bracelet prominently displayed.

What should I bring?

Experts advise that you bring your own supplies (two weeks' worth) and be prepared to rely on them if possible. This includes a continuous glucose monitor (CGM), insulin pump and/or hybrid closed-loop system, if you have them; insulin, if you don't want to change your insulin-type, and syringes; and a supply of treatments for low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).

When is a vaccine going to be ready?

Scientists around the world are working to find a vaccine against COVID-19, and experts suggest that the safety and effectiveness could be known by end-of-year in 2020 or the beginning of 2021. Even if it is successful, however, the latest update is that the vaccine will not be widespread for several months, meaning spring 2021. To date, there are more than 20 vaccines being tested.

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses. SARS-CoV-2 is one of those viruses — it causes the illness COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2 is related to other coronaviruses that cause illness in humans such as those that cause SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome).

Every gift takes us one step closer to curing T1D. Find out how you can support JDRF and make a difference in the lives of people with T1D by visiting jdrf.org/donate.

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