

DKA and illness

Everyone occasionally has episodes of illness and it rarely develops into DKA. Illness can make diabetes more difficult to control and make you feel thirsty, tired and pass more urine than usual. **Here are some tips to help you manage your diabetes when you are ill:**

- Rest – strenuous exercise can make your blood glucose levels rise.
- If you are able to test your blood glucose levels, test at least 4 times over the day. You may need an increase in your diabetes medication if the blood glucose readings are much higher than usual (seek medical advice about this).
- Drink plenty of sugar-free fluids to prevent dehydration. Try to drink about 4 to 6 pints over the day.
- If you do not feel like eating normal meals, eat or drink easily digested foods such as milky drinks, ice cream, yoghurt and soups.
- If you think you have an infection, see your GP.
- You can use over-the-counter medicines for sore throats and a raised temperature if required. These do not have to be sugar-free. Ask your pharmacist for advice.
- If your symptoms are getting worse or you think you are developing DKA, seek urgent medical advice.

If you are going into hospital or are admitted for major surgery or are admitted for an acute serious medical illness, your doctor may stop your SGLT2 inhibitor medication. It can usually be restarted once you have recovered.

Type 2 diabetes

and diabetic ketoacidosis

Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) is a serious condition that can occur in people with type 1 diabetes. It is very rare in people with type 2 diabetes. You have been given this leaflet because you are taking a tablet that may occasionally increase your risk. This can occur in some of the following circumstances:

- If you have a severe illness
- If you are very dehydrated
- If you have had significant weight loss and have poor appetite
- If there is alcohol abuse
- If you have a sudden reduction in insulin treatment
- During surgery

This leaflet explains:

- What diabetic ketoacidosis is
- What to look out for
- What to do if you think you have it

The content of this leaflet has been developed by TREND-UK in conjunction with AstraZeneca, who are also responsible for printing and distribution.

AstraZeneca 

What is diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA)?

- DKA develops due to an *absolute* lack of insulin in type 1 diabetes. DKA in type 2 diabetes is due to severe *relative* insulin deficiency.
- Insulin is needed to get glucose from the blood into cells for energy.
- DKA develops when there is not enough glucose entering the cells because there is not enough circulating insulin in the body. The body then begins to use its fat stores as an alternative source of energy. This results in acidic **ketones** being produced.
- Ketones are toxic and disrupt the normal functioning of the body's processes.

TREND-UK has a number of downloadable leaflets covering a range of diabetes-related topics:

www.trend-uk.org

Signs and symptoms of DKA

If you are able to test your blood glucose, you may notice it is higher than usual. However, DKA can still be present with moderately raised blood glucose levels and may include the following symptoms:

- Thirst
- Passing more urine than usual
- Rapid weight loss
- Drowsiness
- Feeling and/or being sick
- Stomach pain
- Breathlessness

Other people may notice that your breath smells of pear-drops or acetone. These are ketones.

A nurse or doctor can test your blood or urine and detect the presence of ketones.

! If you have the signs and symptoms of DKA, you should get to hospital quickly for treatment