

Blood Glucose (Sugar) Management in the Hospital: Patient Guide



Sharing with the Health Team

Speak to your hospital healthcare team about:

- Your home diabetes management.
- Your diabetes concerns.
- Taking part in the daily management of your diabetes during your hospital stay.



Blood Glucose Changes

Illness, medical procedures, infections, and changes in diet and activity in hospital can make your blood glucose higher or lower than at home.



Notify Your Nurse if You Feel:

Signs of high blood glucose (**hyperglycemia**):

- ◇ Dry mouth and thirsty
- ◇ Pee more often than usual
- ◇ Tired and sluggish

Signs of a low blood glucose (**hypoglycemia**):

- ◇ Shaky, light-headed/dizzy
- ◇ Nervous, irritable, anxious
- ◇ Sweaty, nauseated
- ◇ Hungry
- ◇ Confused, unable to concentrate, headaches



Meal Times

- Ask what the meal times are on your unit.
- Tell your nurse if your meal arrives before your blood glucose has been checked or before you have received your diabetes medications.
- Tell your nurse if your meal is delayed and you have already taken your diabetes medication.



Activity and Blood Glucose

- Changes to your physical activity may affect your blood glucose.
- Notify your healthcare team if you have symptoms of high or low blood glucose, during or after any physical activity (for example, physiotherapy).



Diabetes Specialist

You can ask to speak to a diabetes specialist or certified diabetes educator (if available) about your diabetes management. This could be a dietitian, a nurse, a pharmacist, nurse practitioner or physician.

When you meet with the specialist, be specific and clear about what diabetes treatments have or have not worked for you in the past.



Blood Glucose Targets and Testing in Hospital

- The target blood glucose for most adult patients while in hospital is **5-10 mmol/L**.
- Your blood glucose will usually be checked four times a day (before each meal and at bedtime).
- If you have a low blood glucose (under 4 mmol/L), you will receive treatment with a fast-acting carbohydrate. Diabetes medications may be adjusted.
- If you have Type 1 Diabetes, and your blood glucose is over 18 mmol/L (or over 14 mmol/L if you use an insulin pump), ketone testing should be done.

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Diabetes Medications in Hospital

Your doctor may continue your home diabetes medications if safe and if your blood glucose is in your set target range. If your blood glucose is outside of your target range, diabetes medications should be adjusted. New medications (including insulin) may be added.

Insulin is a commonly used diabetes medication in hospital. Insulin can be given by an injection under the skin or by intravenous (IV). Insulin doses can be adjusted to keep blood glucose in target.

If insulin is ordered by injection you may be prescribed Basal Bolus Insulin Therapy (BBIT). Basal insulin is given once or twice daily and controls blood glucose between meals and overnight. Bolus insulin is given with meals to stop blood glucose from rising after meals.

If given by IV, you will receive a continuous flow of insulin to control your blood glucose. Your blood glucose may be checked often. The IV insulin dose may be adjusted to keep the blood glucose in target.



Website Resources

- diabetes.ca—a resource for Canadians for national diabetes guidelines and management
- myhealth.alberta.ca—a resource for patient diabetes management



Management of Diabetes

Type 2 Diabetes is managed with physical activity, nutrition, and medications, which may include insulin.

Type 1 Diabetes is always managed with insulin. Healthy nutrition and physical activity are also important.



Going Home

Before you leave the hospital, you should:

- Have written instructions about your diabetes medications. This includes the dose of each medication and when each medication should be taken.
- Know how often to check your blood glucose in a day.
- Ask about whether ketone testing is appropriate for you. If it is, learn when it is recommended to test for ketones.
- Know who your diabetes care provider will be and when you should arrange to see them in follow-up.
- Contact your diabetes care provider if you are feeling unwell or have questions or concerns about your blood glucose or your diabetes medications.
- If you don't have a family doctor, call Health Link Alberta at 811.

Notes: