



# COVID-19 – Living with diabetes and other endocrine conditions



## Am I at greater risk of being infected with COVID-19 if I have diabetes?

Current evidence suggests that people with diabetes are not at any higher risk of being infected with COVID-19 than the general population.



## What are the risks of being unwell if I do contract the coronavirus?

Not everyone with diabetes is the same – some who contract COVID-19 may not be at more risk of becoming unwell. However, those with high blood glucose levels, or who also have other health conditions or a weakened immune system may have more severe symptoms.

The virus may be harder to treat and you may take longer to recover because illness can result in an increase in blood glucose levels.

## What can I do to be prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Follow the Government’s advice** to minimise risk and spread of COVID-19.



- **Monitor your blood glucose levels** – high blood glucose can affect your ability to fight illness and infection.



- **Continue routine diabetes health checks** with your GP and/or Endocrinologist (diabetes specialist). Clinics have processes in place to see patients safely and many are now offering Telehealth appointments, so you may not need to attend in person.



- Remember, **blood collection centres** are separate from COVID-19 testing and **have high safety and hygiene standards** including social distancing measures. It is important to get blood tests recommended by your GP, for example the HbA1c test (your ‘average’ blood glucose over the last 10–12 weeks), can provide reassurance that you’re on



track or pick up on any problems so you can take early action.

- **Have a sick day plan in place.** If you are not sure what a sick day plan is or if it has been a long time since you had to consider one, now is the time to follow up with your GP or Diabetes Educator so you are prepared if you become unwell for any reason.



- Learn more about [sick day planning if you live with type 1 diabetes](#), (external site).
- Learn more about [sick day planning if you live with type 2 diabetes](#), (external site).
- For parents of children living with type 1 diabetes, refer to section 7 of the [Perth Children’s Hospital handbook](#) (external site).

- **Have enough diabetes supplies for 30 days** in case you become unwell. This includes prescriptions, medications and your chosen hypoglycaemia treatment which may be needed to increase your blood glucose levels.



- **Stay as healthy as possible:**



- take your usual medications
- eat nutritious food
- continue regular, moderate intensity exercise at least 30 minutes most days
- If you smoke, now is a good time to consider quitting as smoking is a risk factor for bad outcomes from COVID-19. Support information is available from [Make Smoking History](#) (external site)
- Avoid or minimise alcohol intake to keep your body's immune system healthy
- Stay in touch with family and friends e.g. by phone or video conferencing
- [Seek support](#) (external site) if you are feeling stressed for any reason

- **Keep any appointments for a diabetes eye check or foot assessment,**



reschedule them if they are cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. If you experience acute problems with your vision or feet, seek medical help as soon as possible.

- **Get vaccinated for influenza** to reduce your risk of having to cope with both COVID-19 and other illnesses at the same time.



## **Addison's disease/adrenal insufficiency/ glucocorticoid dependent**

People on long-term glucocorticoid medication may have a higher risk of infections and need to stringently follow the Government's advice on minimising risk and spread of COVID-19.

If unwell, most people will be able to self-manage at home with an increased dose of glucocorticoid medication, regular fluid intake and paracetamol. However, people should not hesitate to contact medical services or seek hospital admission if their situation deteriorates and they become increasingly unwell despite these measures.

### **People with Addison's disease, other hypoadrenalism and those on long term glucocorticoids should have:**

- a good supply of usual medication

- glucocorticoid sick day plan (e.g. double/triple dose of glucocorticoid medication for 2–3 days or attend hospital Emergency Department for injection of glucocorticoid if more unwell).
- hydrocortisone emergency self-injection kit
- glucocorticoid advice warning card or medic alert bracelet
- seasonal flu vaccination and pneumonia vaccination if indicated.

If you need assistance with any of these, talk to your GP or specialist.

## **National Diabetes Service Scheme (NDSS) changes during COVID-19**

- **Signing NDSS Forms:** At this time, Health Professionals are able to complete some NDSS forms that provide access to services and diabetes products without a co-signature by the person with diabetes. This temporary change will include the:
  - NDSS registration form
  - Medication change form
  - Continuous and flash glucose monitoring eligibility assessment forms
  - Insulin pump consumable assessment form

The only form you will still need to sign is the [personal details update form](#) (external site)

- **Home delivery of medicines and NDSS products by pharmacies**

- Medicine home delivery services are now available to help people stay at home and reduce their exposure to COVID-19.
- Participating pharmacies can offer you free delivery of medicines using the Australia Post Express Post network. There is a weight limit for parcels of 500 grams.
- People living with chronic health conditions such as diabetes are eligible.
- Participating pharmacies may be able to add your NDSS products to your home medicine delivery.
- Check with your local community pharmacy whether they are offering this service.

- **Automatic six-month extension for access to Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips (BGTS) through the NDSS:** During the COVID-19 pandemic people with type 2 diabetes can access subsidised blood glucose test strips from their local pharmacy or the [Diabetes WA online shop](#) (external site). The Australian Government has temporarily suspended the need for the usual six-month approval form.

Stay up-to-date about NDSS at the [Diabetes WA](#) (external site) or [NDSS Website](#) (external site).

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## Online and telephone support services

### Coronavirus information helpline

COVID health information and advice  
**13 COVID (13 268 43)** – 7am – 10pm, seven days

### Healthdirect

Health advice from healthcare professionals  
**1800 022 222** – 24 hour service

### Diabetes WA Helpline

Health advice from Diabetes Educators  
**1300 001 880** – 8:30am – 8pm, Monday – Friday, (including public holidays)

Or call to arrange a clinical consultation with a Credentialed Diabetes Educator (including dietitians, nurses, exercise physiologists and pharmacists). The team will liaise with your doctor and help you take the easy steps to get started with Telehealth.

### MyDESMOND

MyDESMOND is a new online type 2 diabetes education program now available at [Diabetes WA](#) (external site). Register your interest online or call **1300 001 880** to get started.

### Diabetes WA LIVE

Series of educational Webinars covering many relevant topics and presented by the health professional team. [Book online](#) (external site).

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