



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?

Most people recover well from COVID-19 however people with diabetes have a greater risk of developing severe illness. Not everyone with diabetes is the same – those with high blood glucose levels, elevated body weight or who also have other health conditions, or a weakened immune system may be at more risk.

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?

- **Roll up for WA and get vaccinated against COVID-19** – it is recommended that people with diabetes get vaccinated against COVID-19. Being vaccinated will reduce the risk of serious illness with COVID-19. It is important that as many Australians as possible get vaccinated. This is the best path forward in the fight against the virus.
 - Please discuss any individual concerns with your GP.
 - Find out more about how to get vaccinated at [Roll up for WA](#) (external link)
- **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 people 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), as this can provide reassurance that you're on track or pick up on anything that might need 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 have updated yours, 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).
 - More resources about [sick day planning for adults living with 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, insulin delivery and blood glucose monitoring supplies, your chosen hypoglycaemia treatment and any other items listed on your sick day management plan. When planning for this, note that there are some limits for how many NDSS products you can order at a time to make sure there is enough for everyone. You can find more information about this on the [NDSS website](#) (external site).



- **Stay as healthy as possible:**

- take your usual medications
- eat a wide variety of nutritious foods and limit your discretionary food intake (foods that are high in added sugar, fats or salt)
- aim to be physically active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week
- 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 [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.



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

- Syringe or pen needle access form
- Continuous and flash glucose monitoring access forms
- Insulin pump consumable access form

To update your personal details you can visit the [NDSS website](#) (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 extension for access to Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips (BGMS) through the NDSS:** The Australian Government has temporarily suspended the need for the usual six-month approval form for people with type 2 diabetes not using insulin to access subsidised BGMS. People can access subsidised BGMS from their local pharmacy or the [Diabetes WA online shop](#) (external site).

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

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 corticosteroid medication for 2–3 days or attend hospital Emergency Department for injection of glucocorticoid if more unwell or are vomiting or have diarrhoea)

- hydrocortisone emergency self-injection kit
- glucocorticoid advice warning card or medic alert bracelet
- seasonal flu vaccination and pneumonia vaccination if indicated.
- COVID-19 vaccination.

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



Online and telephone support services

National Coronavirus Helpline

COVID health information and advice
1800 020 080 – 24 hour service

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

MyDESMOND

MyDESMOND is a new online type 2 diabetes education program now available at [Diabetes WA](#) (external site). Register your interest online or call 1800 637 700 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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