

Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) is dangerous

You should know how to prevent it. This guide will tell you when to check for ketones—and what to do if you find them.

Start here

High blood glucose **17 or more** on two separate before-meal tests, 4 hours apart? **or** Are you unwell?

Danger signs

Tell a parent, partner, or supportive friend you are ill, and

Check for Ketones

Are ketones positive?

Urine: more than a trace, or
Blood ketones: more than 1mmol/L?

Yes

If blood glucose is less than 12 mmol/L

If blood glucose is 12 mmol/L or over

Give yourself an extra dose of fast-acting insulin. (Pump users should give this by pen or syringe.)

To calculate the dose, add up all the units of insulin you usually take in a day, and divide by 6 (maximum single dose 15 units).

If the blood glucose is still high 4 hours later, repeat the extra dose. Keep monitoring blood glucose and ketones – you can repeat the extra dose of insulin every 4 hours as necessary.

Contact your diabetes team if things have not settled within 12 hours. If you are getting worse, seek medical advice urgently (tell them you may have DKA.)

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your diabetes team.
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If you have any of the following:

- Persistent vomiting for 2-4 hours
- Heavy or rapid breathing
- Abdominal pain
- Moderate or severe dehydration

You may have established ketoacidosis. Urgent hospital assessment is required.

Check your blood glucose at least 4 times a day, and ketones at least twice a day, until you are sure things have settled.

If urine ketones are +++ or more, or blood ketones over 3mmol/L, recheck glucose and ketones within 2 hours.

This may be starvation ketosis. Be sure you get enough carbohydrate to eat or drink. If you are feeling queasy, take this as sips of a sugary drink. Aim to drink a glassful every 1-2 hours – and take plenty sugar-free fluid too.

Keep a stock of ketone test strips – and make sure they are not out of date. Once opened, Ketostix™ should be replaced within 6 months.

You should also have a supply of fast-acting insulin (Actrapid, Apidra, Humalog, Humulin S, or Novorapid).

Remember

- **Never stop taking your insulin**
- **Extra doses of insulin are in addition to your usual treatment**
- You need regular carbohydrate – even if your blood glucose is high.

www.diabetesinscotland.org.uk/ketocard