

COVID-19

Q&A ON COVID-19 AND NCDS

21 MAY 2020

IF I HAVE DIABETES, WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19?

1 ARE PEOPLE WITH DIABETES MORE LIKELY TO GET COVID-19?

- People with diabetes are more likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19, than those who do not have diabetes.
- Unfortunately, persons with diabetes who get COVID-19 are more likely to die than those without diabetes.

2 IF I HAVE DIABETES, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO AVOID GETTING COVID-19?

- Wash your hands frequently, always avoid touching your face.
- Stay away from anyone who you know is sick.
- Ask family and friends who are sick or could be sick to kindly avoid visiting you.
- Always stay at least 3 feet (1 meter) apart from any other person when you are outside of the house.
- Minimize, and if possible, completely avoid, going to places with large crowds – this includes the stores, supermarkets, and pharmacies. When possible, ask a friend or relative who is healthy to purchase necessary items for you.
- Wear a face mask for protection if you must leave home to go to crowded areas.



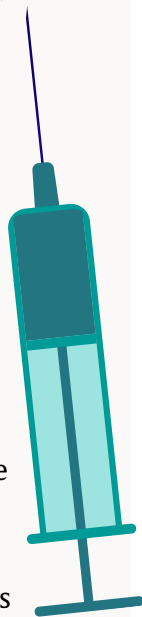
3 HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF AND MY FAMILY DURING THIS PANDEMIC?

- Planning for essentials like food, water and medicines is critical.
- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of all your medications; keep at least a 90-day supply on hand.
- Ensure an adequate supply of healthy food choices.
- Be physically active every day.
- Have cleaning supplies in your home (soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer).
- Keep your diabetes under control.
- Have some easy to take simple carbohydrates in case you need to bring your blood sugar up quickly (e.g. juice, hard candy).
- Have your doctor's phone number handy, somewhere you and your family members can find it easily. Other phone numbers that may be helpful to have on hand are: pharmacy, medical specialists, insurance provider.

COVID-19

4 WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL ILL?

- You should call your doctor right away.
- Feeling ill can include thirst or a very dry mouth, frequent urination, constant tiredness, dry or flushed skin, nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain, difficulty breathing, hard time paying attention, or confusion.
- There are other reasons, besides COVID-19, that could be causing you to feel ill. With diabetes, many other diseases could be serious.
- If your blood sugar is low (below 70 mg/dl), eat 15 grams of simple carbohydrates such as honey, jam, Jell-O, hard candy, popsicles, juice or regular soda; make sure your blood sugar level is coming up by checking in 15 minutes.
- Check your blood sugar more often than usual (generally, every 2-3 hours).
- Drink lots of water. Staying well hydrated is critical. Take small sips every 15 minutes or so throughout the day to avoid dehydration.
- When you are sick it is sometimes difficult to control your blood sugar:
 - for type I Diabetes: If your blood sugar has registered high (above 240mg/dl) more than 2 times in a row, check for ketones in your urine (if you have access to a urine dipstick). Call your doctor's office immediately if you have large ketones in your urine. Call your doctor if you are unable to bring your blood sugar down.
 - for type II Diabetes: Call your doctor if you are unable to bring your blood sugar down below 240mg/dl.



- Wash your hands and clean your injection/infusion and finger-stick sites with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.
- Do not be afraid to seek care if you are not well. Most hospitals and clinics have set up ways of protecting people coming in from getting infected by the coronavirus. It is important to get help if you are sick.
- If you are hospitalized, be sure to contact your physician after you leave the hospital. This will make sure you continue to recover well and any medical issues can be addressed right away.

5 SHOULD I STILL GO TO THE DOCTOR FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED VISITS?

- It is important to keep your regularly scheduled doctor's visits.
- Many clinics have established ways to talk to the doctor on the phone without having to physically go to the clinic. This keeps you safe by keeping you away from places where you could be exposed to the coronavirus. Be sure to stay in touch with your doctor.
- Continue to check your blood glucose level frequently and keep a log of your blood sugar level. This can be helpful when you talk to your doctor.
- Check your feet (or have someone living with you check) for any skin break down (or ulcers) or signs of infection that may be developing. This is something your doctor would usually do if you were seeing them in person.

COVID-19

6 IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MY MEDICATIONS WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- Do not start or stop any medication without first talking to your doctor.
- The most important thing is to take your medications regularly as prescribed, and to keep your blood sugar under good control.
- Make sure you do not run out of your medication. Call your pharmacy for a 3-month's supply of all your medications. This makes sure that you don't run out and means you don't have to go to the pharmacy as often.
- At this time there is no evidence that any medications should be stopped if you develop COVID-19.



7 WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM FEELING STRESSED OR ANXIOUS?

- These are trying times that can be very stressful. Many individuals with chronic disease already have a lot on their mind and may have underlying depression and/or anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic can make things more difficult. Know that you are not alone.
- Be sure to find ways of taking a break from coronavirus news, this provides you with the space to think about your wellbeing.
- Stay connected to friends and family. Call friends and family members regularly to maintain social connectedness.
- Find things that help you relax, such as reading, listening to music, or walking.
- If things become too much, if you experience a great deal of anxiety or depression, be sure to reach out for help: call your friend or family member or call your physician.

PAHO/NMH/MH/COVID-19/20-0014

© Pan American Health Organization, 2020.

Some rights reserved. This work is available under license CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

PAHO



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT.

www.paho.org/coronavirus