

Information for families of children with type 1 diabetes regarding Coronavirus COVID-19 in Australia.

If you are finding it difficult to access insulin supplies; please call

NDSS helpline number 1800 637 700

We understand many families have questions about the risk to children with diabetes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although information on the risk of children with type 1 diabetes contracting the virus is limited, we believe the risk is similar to that in other children, but as with all illnesses, diabetes needs more attention when you are unwell.

Children generally seem to be at lower risk of significant illness if they are infected. Advice from the Australian Chief Medical Officer (March 2020): “There is very little evidence of significant COVID-19 disease in children. Initially, it was suggested that children were less susceptible to infection, but more recent evidence supports the fact that children may be infected, in many cases without being aware of symptoms. The role children play in transmission is unknown.”

Children with type 1 diabetes are not believed to be any more immunocompromised than children without diabetes. There have been some messages in the media that people with diabetes are more susceptible to COVID-19. This is more relevant to older people with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes, depending on their cardiovascular risks and other co-morbidities, especially respiratory.

If your child with type 1 diabetes becomes unwell, you should follow your usual sick day management plan, including regular monitoring of glucose and ketone levels, with insulin dose adjustments as required. Your child should stay home from school and follow the government recommendations for illnesses associated with fevers, cough and other respiratory symptoms. Furthermore, government recommendations regarding testing and social distancing for Covid-19 should be followed.

Help prevent the spread

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene and keeping your distance from others when you are sick is the best defence against most viruses. This is recommended for all Australians

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- Cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser or wash hands
- If unwell, stay at home and avoid contact with others
- Practice social distancing -stay more than 1.5 metres away from other people

School

Currently the advice from the Australian Government is that schools should remain open, although some states have now elected to close schools (Victoria and ACT). Any child who is unwell should not go to school. There is no evidence that parents of children with type 1 diabetes should respond differently from other families. The choice whether to send your child to school or not, is an individual one.

Clinics

Many units are offering phone/video consultations in place of face-to-face clinic visits with your Diabetes Doctor or Educator. Families can prepare for these consultations by:

- Wearing CGM and linking your device to your clinic will provide your Health Care Professional with the best information to offer telephone advice.
- If you are on a pump, download your pump before the phone/video consultation. If you cannot download from home or are not linked to your clinic, please contact your pump company to arrange this as soon as possible
(Call Medtronic 1800 777 808 or Tandem t:slim AMSL 1300 851 056)

Be prepared

- Have at least 1 month's supply of all insulin and other diabetes equipment (blood glucose and ketone testing strips, pump sets and CGM equipment) available at home. Currently there is no interruption to the supply of insulin and no need to stockpile. Stockpiling could cause shortages for other people with diabetes, including other children with type 1 diabetes. For concerns regarding availabilities of insulin and other essential medicines and National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) products, please refer to the Diabetes Australia Statement at: <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/news/15723?type=articles>
- Arrange to have an early flu injection in April this year (so you don't get 2 airway illnesses at once, as well as helping ease the load on your health system and protecting others).

More information

The situation regarding COVID-19 is evolving and changing rapidly, so our understanding of the risks in relation to diabetes in children may change.

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness – not coronavirus.

Ibuprofen

Some clinicians have suggested the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen early in the course of COVID-19 disease may have a negative impact on disease outcomes, however there is no Australian advice against using NSAIDs and moreover the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the WHO do not recommend that NSAIDs are avoided when clinically indicated. Because of these concerns, some providers are using paracetamol in place of NSAIDs for reduction of fever. This is of particular relevance to children and young people using CGM, where paracetamol can interfere with the accuracy of interstitial glucose level measurements. In this situation regular formal BGL finger-stick testing should occur. APEG advice is to use either or both medications to control fever as required, with regular finger-stick measures when using paracetamol for the following 6-8 hours.

- **For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au**
- Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.
- The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts. If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.
- There is also good information at <https://www.jdrf.org/coronavirus/> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.
- If you are planning to travel, please follow the travel health advice from the Australian government at <https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/>