

Diabetes Disaster Preparedness

The Florida Department of Health in Orange County wants to make sure you and your family are prepared. To assist you, here are Diabetes Disaster Preparedness tips.

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Patient Information:

As a person with diabetes, your daily routine involves schedules and planning. An emergency can seriously affect your health. It may be difficult to cope with a disaster when it occurs. You and your family should plan and prepare beforehand even if the event is a loss of electricity for a few hours.

The first 72 hours following a disaster are the most critical for families. This is the time when you are most likely to be alone. For this reason, it is essential for you and your family to have a disaster plan and kit which should provide for all your family's basic needs during these first hours.

Emergency Supply Kit

You should safely store the following medical supplies in an emergency supply kit or have them readily available:

- Copy of your emergency information, health insurance cards, a list of medications, and names and phone numbers for doctor and pharmacy
- Extra copies of prescriptions for medications that you are already taking
- Glucagon Emergency Kit (if on insulin)
- Insulin or pills (include all medications that you take daily including over-the-counter medications).
- Include an icepack, if possible, to keep insulin cool
- Insulin syringes
- Insulin pump supplies (if on insulin pump)
- Alcohol swabs
- Cotton balls & tissues
- A meter to measure blood sugar
- Blood sugar diary
- Strips for your meter
- Urine ketone testing strips
- Lancing device and lancets
- Quick acting carbohydrate (for example, glucose tablets, orange juice, etc.)
- Longer lasting carbohydrate sources (for example, cheese and crackers)
- Empty hard plastic bottle with cap to dispose used lancets and syringes (for example, detergent bottle)
- Hand sanitizer

Other Kit Supplies:

- Make sure you have enough supplies for 2 weeks
- These supplies should be checked at least every 2 – 3 months
- Watch for expiration dates

- Flashlight with extra batteries, Pad / pencil
- Whistle / noisemaker, Matches / candles
- Extra pair of glasses, First-aid kit
- Female sanitary supplies
- Copy of health insurance cards
- Heavy work gloves, Important family documents
- Tools, Water
- Food, Clothing and bedding
- Radio with extra batteries, Cell phone

Helpful Hints about Insulin, Pens, Syringes:

- Never skip taking your insulin unless your doctor tells you to.
- All insulin that comes in a bottle, except glargine, can stay at room temperature (59° - 86°F) for 28 days.
- Once an insulin bottle is opened, it is only good for 28 days even if it is refrigerated. At the end of 28 days, an open bottle of insulin must be thrown away, even if some insulin is left in the bottle.
- Insulin pens in use can be stored at room temperature according to manufacturer's directions.
- Insulin pens that are not in use and are refrigerated are good until they have reached their expiration date.
- Insulin should not be exposed to excessive light, heat or cold.
- Regular and Lantus insulins should be clear.
- NPH, Lente, Ultralente, 75/25, 50/50, and 70/30 insulins should be uniformly cloudy before rotating.
- Insulin that clumps or sticks to the sides of the bottle should not be used.
- Although reuse of your insulin syringes is not generally recommended, in life and death situations, you may have to alter this policy. Do not share your insulin syringes with other people.

Things to Remember:

- Stress can cause a rise in your blood sugar.
- Erratic mealtimes can cause changes in your blood sugar.
- Excessive work to repair damage caused by the disaster (without stopping for snacks) can lower your blood sugar.
- Excessive exercise when your blood sugar is over 250mg can cause your blood sugar to go higher.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes to protect your feet if you must go outside after a disaster/event.
- Check your feet daily for an irritation, infection, open sores or blisters.
- Disaster debris can increase your risk for injury.
- Heat, cold, excessive dampness and inability to change footwear can lead to infection, especially if your blood sugar is high.
- Never go without shoes.

Hot Weather Tips:

- Stay indoors in air-conditioned or fan cooled comfort.
- Avoid exercising outside.
- Wear light colored cotton clothing.
- Remain well hydrated (water, diet drinks).
- Avoid salt tablets unless prescribed by your physician.

Seek emergency treatment if you feel or have:

- Fatigue, weakness, abdominal cramps, decreased urination, fever, or confusion.

You should wear diabetes identification AT ALL TIMES

Food Items to be Stored

- 1 large box unopened crackers (saltines)
- 1 jar peanut butter
- 1 small box powdered milk (use within 6 months)
- 1 gallon or more of water per day per person for at least one week
- 2 - 6-pack packages cheese and crackers or 1 jar soft cheese
- 1 pkg. dry, unsweetened cereal
- 6 cans regular soda
- 6 cans diet soda
- 6-pack canned orange or apple juice
- 6 pack boxed, non-refrigerated milk
- 6 cans "lite" or water packed fruit
- 1 spoon, fork and knife per person
- Disposable cups
- 4 packages of glucose tablets or small hard candies for low blood sugar
- 1 can each of tuna, salmon, chicken, nuts per person
- Manual can opener

These supplies should be checked often and replaced, if expired.

Food Considerations During a Disaster:

- Food and water supply may be limited and/or contaminated. Do not eat or drink food or water you think may be contaminated. It may be necessary to boil water for 10 minutes before use.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Maintain your meal plan to the best of your ability. Your meals should include a variety of healthy meat/meat substitutes (i.e., peanut butter, dried beans, eggs), milk/milk products, fruits, vegetables, cereal, grains.
- Limit sugar/sugar-containing foods including:
 - Jellies, jams, molasses
 - Honey
 - Syrups (fruits canned in sugar syrup, pancake syrup)
 - Frosted cake
 - Presweetened or sugar-coated cereals
 - Pie, pastry, Danish pastry, doughnuts

- Chocolate
- Custards, pudding, sherbet, ice cream
- Gelatin
- Soda
- Cookies, brownies
- Monitor your blood sugars frequently and record in diary.
- When reading labels, limit products with these sugar-containing ingredients:
 - Sugar
 - Corn syrup
 - Dextrose
 - Sucrose
 - Corn sweeteners
 - Honey
 - Molasses
 - Brown sugar
 - Fruit syrup
- **Avoid** greasy, fried foods.
- Try to eat healthy meals and snacks at the same time every day. **Avoid** periods of hunger and overindulgence. The quantity and frequency of your food intake should remain similar day-to-day depending upon your activity level.
- **Increase** food and water intake during periods of increased exertion or physical activity by either eating between-meal snacks before activity or by eating additional food with meals.
- **Carry** a fast source of sugar with you at all times:
 - 3 glucose tablets
 - 1 small box of raisins
 - 6-7 small hard sugar candies

Sick Day Rules During a Disaster

- Always take your insulin or pills on time or close to it. Never omit your insulin unless your doctor has told you otherwise. Insulin is still good if there is no refrigeration. A used or unused bottle of insulin may be kept at room temperature (59° - 86°F) for 28 days. Discard opened unrefrigerated insulin after 28 days.
- Keep an extra bottle of each type of insulin you use on hand at all times.
- Eat within 15 min. or no later than ½ hour after taking your insulin (depending on insulin type) or diabetes medicine. Try to eat on time.
- Never skip a meal. If you cannot eat solid food because of nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea, sip regular coke, eat hard candies, fruit or regular soft drinks instead of following your usual meal plan.

Most Important:

- **Do not let yourself get dehydrated. Limit or avoid drinks with alcohol.**
- **Drink plenty of liquids.**
- **In between meal times, sip water diet soda. (This will not replace food, but can help you be hydrated.)**
- Rest.
- Check your blood sugar. Notify your doctor if your blood sugar average is over 240 mg or if you are ill for 2 days.
- Test your urine for ketones when:
 - Your blood sugar average is over 240mg.
 - You are vomiting
 - You have symptoms of high blood sugar (increased thirst or hunger more than usual, quick weight loss, increased urination, very tired, stomach pain, breathing fast or fruity breath smell).

Call your doctor if your ketone test is moderate or high and/or if you have symptoms of high blood sugar (as listed in number 8).

- You may need more than your usual amount of insulin on a sick day. Your doctor can guide you in this.

Finally, if you need medical assistance/or are out of all medications and food, and cannot reach your doctor, immediately:

- **Go to the nearest hospital or Emergency Medical Center, if possible; or**
- **Contact the police or 911 if it is an emergency.**