



Having a great—and safe—summer.

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Planning ahead

Especially after a long winter, the arrival of warm weather signals a time of potential travel, beach outings, outdoor exercise, picnics, and barbecues. As a person with diabetes, there is no reason you can't partake in these activities—you just need a little extra thought and preparation.

Beating the heat

One of the great pleasures of summer is the warm weather that makes it possible for you to enjoy a game of golf or a day at the beach. But at a time when the U.S. is warming faster than the rest of the world, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, and extremely hot days (warmer than 95°F) occur more frequently, it's more vital than ever to protect yourself and your diabetes supplies. Some tips:

First, yourself.

When it's hot out, people with diabetes are more vulnerable to heat exhaustion. Some diabetes complications can damage nerves and blood vessels, affecting your sweat glands so they don't cool as well as they should. Hot weather and dehydration may cause your blood sugar levels to fluctuate. Check your levels more often in the heat, and stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, avoiding alcohol, limiting caffeinated beverages (which can contribute to dehydration). Always wear plenty of sunscreen, and remember to reapply, especially after sweating or swimming. One final tip: Avoid walking barefoot, as tempting as it might be. For many people with diabetes, a small scrape or cut can lead to serious infection.

Your diabetes supplies.

Heat can damage insulin, test strips, and other medications and supplies. When you go out into the hot weather, keep your insulin and test strips in a cooler bag, although never directly on a gel pack or ice. (Many cooler bags now have pockets in which to insert ice packs, which will prevent direct contact with medication.) Even in a cooler, don't leave insulin in a hot car, as temperatures can increase rapidly in vehicles standing directly in the sun. When it comes to your insulin pump or continuous glucose monitor (CGM), remember that sweat can loosen the adhesives and cause them to fall off. If you remove your pump or monitor, don't leave them in direct sunlight.

Traveling?

Don't curtail your enjoyment of travel because of your diabetes. But whether you're driving to the nearest lake or flying across continents, preparation is key. Don't curtail your enjoyment of travel because of your diabetes.

- ✓ Take extra medication and supplies, as well as prescriptions, in case of an emergency or a delay.
- ✓ If you're traveling by plane, do not check your medications—extreme temperatures can damage them. In preparation for going through security, keep your meds in a separate bag, away from toiletries. Diabetes medications can exceed limit of 3.4 liquid ounces, so notify the TSA officers as they begin the screening process.
- ✓ Whether in America or abroad, find the location and contact information of the nearest medical facility, just in case.
- ✓ Injecting yourself with insulin while the plane is in the air can be difficult because air-pressure changes can affect insulin vials and syringes. If using syringes with vials, avoid injecting air into the vial while in flight. Insulin pens are generally not affected.
- ✓ If traveling abroad, wear a medical bracelet or necklace that says you have diabetes. (You should do this anyway, but it's especially important when you're away from home.) Learn how to say "I have diabetes" in the language of the country you're traveling to, if possible.

The glories (and pitfalls) of summer food

Summer is renowned for good things to eat. It is a great time to enjoy hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecued chicken, potato salad, ice cream, and pie in the backyard, at the ball game, on a picnic table at a family reunion. Following is the good news—and bad news—of summertime food.

The good news

What's not available for most of the rest of the year (or not available so cheaply or in such profusion) is fresh produce—berries, plums, peaches, watermelon, tomatoes, cucumbers, celery, leafy greens. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) calls many of them "superstar" foods—like dark leafy vegetables, avocados, and berries—because they are rich in healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals. Cucumbers and celery are filled with water, which can help keep you hydrated. Berries and melons are rich fiber, which can help lower blood sugar—although they also contain natural sugars, so keep portions small.

The bad news

That food that tastes so good outdoors often has hidden ingredients. Brown sugar is often added to barbecue sauce and baked beans. Salads are good, but mayonnaise-based salad dressings or dips are not. Neither are loaded baked potatoes. That classic hamburger can be nice, but a hamburger bun? Full of carbs, so lose it, or try a wrap. And much that goes along with it—the ketchup or special sauce, the fries or chips—is just the type of food you are trying to avoid. You don't have to totally abstain, but your guiding principle should be moderation in all things.

A last note: exercise

If your area is experiencing a heat wave, you may have to adapt your exercise program to avoid running, biking, or even walking in extreme conditions. Try exercising early in the mornings or in the evenings, if the weather is cool enough. You can also try a membership at a gym or a YMCA, where you can hit the treadmill in air-conditioning. No matter where you work out, be sure to stay hydrated.

Sources: | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/articles/managing-diabetes-in-the-heat.html> | <https://www.mynmhealth.org/how-to-manage-your-diabetes-in-the-summertime/> | <https://www.bswhealth.com/blog/7-tips-for-better-blood-sugar-control-this-summer/> | <https://www.umassmed.edu/dcoe/diabetes-education/patient-resources/extreme-heat-and-diabetes/> | <https://sweetlife.org.za/travelling-with-diabetes-8-helpful-tips/> | <https://type2diabetesrevolution.com/road-trips-with-t2d/> | <https://www.epa.gov/climatechange-science/extreme-heat>

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