

How Does The Heat Affect My Diabetes?

Summer time, and the living is...well, not so easy. Heat, travel, and other summer-related stressors can take a toll on diabetes control. Do you know why the heat index matters so much?

A recent Mayo Clinic survey revealed that most people with diabetes don't realize how dangerous hot weather can be. In addition to complicating blood sugar control, hot weather brings with it the risks of dehydration, sunburn, heat stroke, and damaged oral medications and insulin. Only half of the patients surveyed knew the definition of the heat index--the combination of air temperature and humidity. High humidity makes heat more dangerous because it slows the evaporation of perspiration, the way the body cools itself. Add to this the fact that people with diabetes have an impaired ability to perspire and cool the body, and you've got dangerous conditions indeed. High temperatures need not be extreme to be dangerous.

The good news is that with a few relatively simple precautions, you can maintain good blood glucose control and enjoy all that summer has to offer.

Extreme temperatures can affect the potency of insulin. Avoid exposing your insulin to temperatures above 86 degrees Fahrenheit or below 36 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Never leave your insulin in a hot car or in direct sunlight.
- Buy an insulated bag to keep insulin from overheating or freezing.
- Storing insulin in the refrigerator can help it maintain potency longer. However, cold insulin makes for a more painful injection, so warm it to room temperature before use.

Always read and follow the manufacturer's directions for use for your particular insulin brand.

Extreme temperature swings can affect the accuracy of meters and test strips. Avoid stowing your meter and supplies in your car in cold or hot weather, and don't leave your equipment outside in direct sunlight or extreme cold. You must even consider the temperature within your own home.

Because of excessive heat and moisture, the bathroom is also a poor choice for storage, as humidity can affect strip accuracy. Storing your strips inside of your meter case in their original package will ensure that they stay clean.

*Drink lots of water, wear sunscreen,
and enjoy your summer!*

-Dr. Moosa



Do you have an insulin pump?

Don't forget to temporarily decrease your basal rate on your pump during active times and in the heat.

Ask your health care provider or call your pump company for specific instructions on how to perform this special feature to avoid low blood sugar and beat the heat!

Did you know that diabetes can hinder your ability to sweat in hot weather? Diabetic autonomic neuropathy can affect the functioning of sweat glands. The human body perspires to cool itself off. If you aren't sweating, you run the risk of overheating at temperatures that some people with diabetes can't tolerate. It's very important to keep yourself hydrated and out of direct sun if you can. Past research shows that during hot weather people with diabetes have an increased number of emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths due to heat-related illnesses.

A recent Mayo Clinic survey revealed that most people with diabetes don't realize how dangerous hot weather can be. In addition to complicating blood sugar control, hot weather brings with it the risks of dehydration, sunburn, heat stroke, and damaged oral medications and insulin.

Pay attention to the weather in the area where you live, especially the heat index. High humidity makes hot weather more dangerous because it can further slow down the body's cooling process.