How to Treat Flu Symptoms When You Have Diabetes

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Coping With the Flu and Diabetes

Having type 1 diabetes is like taking care of a baby 24/7. When that baby gets the flu, it requires even more work and mindfulness to care of it – just like when someone living with diabetes catches the flu.

Why Is the Flu Bad for Diabetics?

Unfortunately having type 1 diabetes can make having the flu 10 times worse, and vice versa. Getting seasonal sickness can wear someone living with diabetes down, as the flu itself has negative effects on blood sugar and having unideal blood sugar can prolong the healing process.

How to Treat the Flu and Diabetes

Thankfully some tips and methods have helped me when dealing with the flu. Being mindful and listening to what your body wants is most important, but over the past eight years of living with type 1 diabetes, I've found that these remedies and simple steps have helped me immensely with getting back into healthy, flu-free shape!

Take Time for Yourself

As someone who tries to never let diabetes get in the way of life, I learned the hard way that sometimes to properly heal faster, taking time to myself to rest and recuperate is necessary.

Stress and physical exertion can be the culprit in prolonging your flu and knocking you out for more days than expected. Taking time to be in bed, having time to feed yourself properly, and being mindful of your illness and how it relates to diabetes will help speed up the healing process.

Sometimes it takes being selfish with your time in certain circumstances to be able to give more of yourself in the long run – this is one of those times!

Increase Your Basal Rate

Infection tends to elevate blood sugar levels, and this is why it's important to keep a close eye on them and potentially increase your basal rate.

Since your body is under stress from fighting infection, it does not utilize the insulin as well as it should, therefore increasing your overall basal might be a good idea. I personally increase my basal rate by 20-30 percent on my worst days of infection.

Another reason why it is especially important to keep blood sugar under control during infection is that the body won't heal as efficiently if blood glucose levels are elevated. Being mindful of how much you might need to

increase your basal will become easier over time. Increasing your basal is truly a game changer when it comes to the flu and diabetes.

Hydrate and Supplement

Flood your body with fluids! Drink all the water, tea, and soup you possibly can.

Whenever I feel a tiny tickle in my throat, warning me that a cold or flu is coming on, drinking a lot of water will usually flush the small infection away and helps me avoid getting full-blown sick. Since I've used this trick, I've only had a cold one time in the last three years – it seriously works.

Other supplements that help me avoid getting sick and help me heal faster are zinc (general immune booster), vitamin C (helps with preventing more serious complications associated with the flu), and a B complex vitamin (helps with overall healing and adapting to illness).

I also try to avoid drinking caffeine on the worst days of sickness, and if I need a boost, I'll go for a matcha tea or opt for a nap instead.

Focus on Nutrition

When I am sick I avoid eating inflammatory foods – these include fried foods, dairy, refined sugar, refined grains, red meat and processed foods in general. Focusing on whole, nutrient dense foods will help your body immensely when it comes to healing as fast as possible.

Eating whatever your taste buds desire is especially tricky when it comes to being sick with diabetes. Your blood sugar is a lot more sporadic under infection and as mentioned above, utilizes insulin less efficiently, which is why it's so important to eat mindfully.

In addition to eating whole, nutrient dense foods, eating lots of fermented foods is a good idea! Since approximately 70 percent of your immune system lives in your gut and fermented foods fuel the gut, it will help you get better! Consuming lots of soups/warm meals that are easily digestible can help the body extract more of the nutrients and get the most out of the benefits the foods are offering.

During the intensely sick days you may not be eating the most delicious, savory foods but eating mindfully will allow you to get back into healthy shape, where you can eat all the things you love again.

The Conclusion

Having the flu with diabetes can be the absolute pits, but thankfully, the body is so smart and will do everything it can to help us get back on track. When we nurture the body with rest, mindful blood sugar adjustments, hydration, and healthy food, we give our bodies the best opportunity to heal as fast as possible.