How to Manage Your Diabetes when It’s Hot Outside

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Diabetes and Hot Weather

Hot weather can have a great impact on someone living with diabetes. Not only can the heat directly affect a diabetic's body, but it can also affect their supplies and medication.

When entering the warmer months of the years, it is a great idea to take the necessary precautions to ensure diabetes will t get in the way of enjoying your time. Admittedly there will always be instances you cannot prepare for and you will have to learn through experience, but there are steps one can take in order to minimize these occurrences.

Read on to learn about diabetes and hot weather are related. You’ll also learn about how hot weather affects the body and diabetic supplies, as tips to keeping blood glucose levels as regular as possible in the heat.

How Heat Affects the Body

The tricky thing about how the hot weather affects a diabetic's body is that it is very dependent on the lifestyle of that person. For someone who exerts exactly the same amount of physical activity throughout the entire year, the heat will most likely cause more frequent elevated blood glucose levels. For someone who does more physical activity during the warmer months, the heat can cause more frequent low blood glucose episodes, which can be extremely dangerous. Both of these repercussions of the heat only affect those taking medication for their diabetes, such as those taking insulin or other forms of medication.

Another instance that would cause a diabetic’s blood glucose to run on the higher side would be because of dehydration, which is much more likely in the heat. Dehydration is not something to overlook and it can be extremely serious for a diabetic; the high blood glucose levels can cause ketoacidosis, as well as reduced absorption of insulin through injections.

How Heat Affects Diabetic Supplies

Insulin and glucagon become less effective with elevated temperatures. Avoid direct sunlight to insulin at all costs in hot weather. Once again, if insulin has become tainted, blood glucose levels can become elevated, possibly becoming dangerous. Insulin will start to go bad at around 46F.

Tips for Keeping Blood Glucose Regular

Monitor and Track Your Blood Glucose Levels

Adjusting insulin doses can help. It’s no surprise that you may have to adjust insulin doses at some point when dealing with hot weather. It’s important to spend a couple of days or a full week tracking what has been going on with your blood glucose levels to notice any abnormalities in high or low events that should be taken note of.

Once you have a clear picture of how the heat affects your body specifically, talk to your doctor about making insulin dose adjustments.

Keeping track of levels will reduce the amount of guessing and will help ensure levels are balanced. For me personally, I am someone who does a lot more physical activity in the warmer months, so I require a lot less insulin!

Stay Hydrated

Staying hydrated is also key. This one is obvious, but because of its simplicity, it can be easy to overlook. Staying hydrated can save your life if you are a diabetic. It is so important that you do so, especially when it is hot outside. Do what you need to do to remind yourself to drink liquids, get a water bottle you will like to use, put a reminder on your phone, write out a log and check off boxes on your fridge. Whatever it takes, it is worth it and necessary to keep blood glucose levels balanced in hot weather.

Keep Your Insulin Cool

Also, make sure you keep your insulin cold. Carry your insulin vials in a cooler pack if you take injections, and if you wear a pump, like me, consider ordering a special cooler pack for your pump. I use the Frio pump wallet cooler and it has saved me so many times, I highly recommend it!

It’s important to note that you should not put your insulin directly on the hard ice pack. If insulin freezes, the protein will break down and it will not work once thawed again. There are plenty of cooler packs designed specifically for inulin vials and pens and if you travel a lot or live in a hot place, it is definitely a worthy investment.

Keep Extra Snacks Around

Make sure to bring extra low treatments because blood glucose levels in the heat can be more unpredictable. It’s a good idea to bring some extra snacks and glucose around with you. Be mindful of bringing snacks that can maintain their composition in the heat; opt for granola bars and apples over chocolate and bananas.

If you’re concerned with the amount of space extra snacks will take up in your purse or pockets, get some glucose gel packs from the pharmacy or an athletic shop. They are super thin and lightweight and fit nicely in small places.

In Review

Navigating hot weather as a diabetic gives a whole new meaning to the phrase “beating the heat”. For us to beat the heat, it takes much more care, awareness and time. Fortunately, after a couple of times of dealing with hot weather, managing blood glucose levels becomes a lot easier and more predictable, which means less stress and more sun!