Diabetes and hot weather

Enjoying the sun is one of the things many people look forward to in the summer. But if you have diabetes, it can be harder to manage your blood glucose (sugar) levels in the hot weather.

Sitting in the sun for long periods can affect your diabetes because you're not being very active, making blood sugar levels higher than usual. On the flipside, if you take [**insulin**](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/treating-your-diabetes/insulin) to treat your diabetes it will be will be absorbed more quickly from the injection site in warm weather, and this increases the risk of [**hypos**](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/hypos).

If you're careful about managing your diabetes then there's no reason you can't have fun in the sun like anybody else. We've created some top tips to stay sun-safe this summer.

**Check blood sugar levels**

If you usually [check your own blood sugar levels](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/testing), do this more often and be ready to adjust your diet or insulin dose if you take insulin. If you plan on being active in the sun, like going for a swim, eat some extra carbohydrate at your meal before or as an extra snack. Check your levels beforehand and have a sugary snack if your levels are low. Keep something sugary to hand too, just in case.

**Keep meters and test strips away from the sun**

Extremes of temperature can also affect [blood glucose meter and test strips](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/testing/test-strips-and-monitors). If you use these, keep your meter and test strips as close to normal room temperature as possible and out of direct sunlight, but don’t refrigerate them as cold temperatures can also lead to misleading results.

**Store insulin properly**

If you take insulin to treat your diabetes, keep a close eye on how you store it. If your blood sugar levels are consistently higher than expected, it's worth considering whether your insulin could have been damaged in the sun. Insulin, in the hot weather especially, is best kept in the fridge or a cool bag (taking care that it does not freeze).

When damaged by heat, clear insulin generally becomes cloudy and cloudy insulin becomes grainy and sticks in the side of the glass. Insulin that has been exposed to bright sunlight sometimes has a brownish colour. Do not use insulin that looks like this. Speak to your GP or a healthcare professional if you're unsure.

**Other top tips**

When you're out and about in the sun, remember to:

wear long sleeves, loose trousers, a hat and sunglasses with a UV 400 label

apply suncream to exposed areas of your body 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun

if you have [neuropathy](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/nerves_neuropathy), you may not be aware of your feet burning, so wear suncream and flip flops on hot ground.

**Heat exhaustion**

Heat exhaustion can develop when the body finds it difficult to keep cool. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, tiredness, muscle cramps, stomach cramps and pale skin. As some of these could also be due to unstable blood sugar levels, it's important to test regularly.

Heat exhaustion needs immediate treatment. Move to a cool place to rest and sip a cold drink. If left untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to the more severe and potentially life-threatening condition heat stroke, so take action straight away.

Symptoms of heat stroke include confusion, hallucinations, rapid breathing and convulsions, all of which require immediate medical attention.