



Diabetes Wellness at Work

A Guide for Employees

The information in this booklet was current at the time of publishing. This booklet includes general diabetes advice; please speak to your diabetes health team for individualised medical advice. Diabetes SA © 2023



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In the workplace

Introduction

People living with diabetes may have successful careers and lifelong employment.

- Many people living with diabetes work in a variety of roles in a range of workplaces.
- If you are living with diabetes, you should be considered for almost any job without diabetes causing too many problems.
- There are some workplaces, though, where living with diabetes may impact the job requirements.

This booklet will cover a range of queries, responsibilities, and safety concerns in the workplace.

The right job for you

Things to think about:

1. Reflect on whether your diabetes will prevent you from completing any of the roles and responsibilities of the job.
2. Consider if diabetes-related symptoms or complications could put you, your colleagues, the public, the environment or the workplace at risk.
3. How will you manage a hypo, diabetes-related symptoms or complications at work?
4. Will living with diabetes impact your safety in the workplace?
5. Will the hours of work cause problems with your diabetes management?
6. Will you need to travel for work?
7. Will you need to carry out hazardous duties?
8. Request a copy of the job description when considering if a new position will suit you.

It is important to consider whether a workplace role is a suitable position for you.

- Most jobs are assessed on a case-by-case basis. If you are interested in a specific job, contact the human resources or recruitment person to determine if there are any workplace restrictions for people living with diabetes.
- Some workplaces may require specific measures to be put in place to ensure safety for you and your colleagues.
- Some jobs require you to reveal that you have diabetes in your application. This is when diabetes-related symptoms or complications could put yourself, your colleagues, the community, the environment, or the workplace at risk.
- You may have to prove your fitness to work by undertaking a medical assessment and providing a letter from your diabetes specialist or endocrinologist about your diabetes management.
- You may be asked to identify any medical condition on an application form or during a job interview. In that case, you should always state that you have diabetes.



Discuss any concerns about diabetes impacting your job requirements or revealing your condition in the workplace with your endocrinologist, treating doctor, or diabetes educator.

Diabetes can be effectively managed with minimal impact on day to day living

- It is good to be prepared to discuss how you manage your diabetes in the workplace.
- Explain how you can adjust your insulin, medications and/or eating routine to accommodate your work.
- Ensure that only limited time out of your workday is required to stay on track with your diabetes management.
- Reveal you may need occasional short breaks; to check your blood glucose levels, eat a snack, take medications, or administer insulin.
- Emphasise that you follow a healthy lifestyle, have regular medical checks, and follow routines.
- Offer to answer any questions about diabetes.

Workplace equal opportunity

You should receive the same treatment as someone without diabetes when working or applying for a job so long as you meet the skills and experience for the position.

- Employers sometimes make judgements and assumptions about people based on factors like age, gender, disability, illness or impairment.
- When applying for a job in Australia, be assured that you have rights for equal opportunity that always support receiving fair treatment.
- **The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)** states it is unlawful to discriminate against people with diseases or illnesses in their workplace or employment.



Safety sensitive jobs

Some jobs may pose limits for you or others living with diabetes to maintain.

This is mainly due to the chances of having a hypo (hypoglycaemic episode) which could put people, property, or the environment at some form of safety risk.

The following jobs are considered safety sensitive or hazardous:

South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS)

All SAAS employees or volunteers are required to meet medical standards for a commercial driver's licence.

- An endocrinologist or treating doctor assessment will decide if you are fit for operational ambulance duties.
- Non-operational employment and volunteering roles may be available options upon request.



The Australian Defence Forces (ADF)

The determining factor for eligibility to the ADF will be your individual type of diabetes and the management of your diabetes, together with your specific job.

- You can discuss this with your endocrinologist or treating doctor; outcomes will be assessed individually.



South Australian Police Officers League (SAPOL)

Recruitment or work with SAPOL will require a report from your endocrinologist. SAPOL Medical Standards may require you to be able to be without medication, food, or water for up to 12 hours at a time.

- You will need to show you are not impacted by hypoglycaemic episodes and can demonstrate suitable management with 12 months of HbA1c results.
- Most applications will be assessed case-by-case and should be discussed with your endocrinologist or treating doctor.



South Australian Prison Health Service (SAPHS)

Employees and applicants for SAPHS must first meet a psychometric assessment to identify their suitability for the role.

- A medical examination, functional capability, and fitness test are required.
- An endocrinologist or treating doctor assessment will help decide if you are fit for correctional services duties.

South Australian Fire Services (MFS or CFS)

The Medical Standards for the MFS and CFS list diabetes as one of many conditions incompatible with firefighting.

- When assessed by an endocrinologist or treating doctor, some fire service employees or applicants in non-operational roles may be considered for employment.
- The Work Health and Safety Act 2012 states fire service volunteers are considered employees.
- Fire service volunteers must meet the 'fit for duty' criteria and declare any medical conditions.



Passenger or commercial transport (e.g. taxi, Uber, truck, train or bus)

In South Australia, licence holders of passenger and commercial transport MUST report if they have a medical condition. When applying for or renewing your driver's license, you must declare you live with diabetes.

- You will need a medical assessment and certificate of fitness subject to regular review.
- All commercial drivers, including drivers of light or heavy vehicles, must complete the 'Fitness to drive' forms.
- Forms for completion can be found at www.sa.gov.au



Pilot or flight cabin crew

If you are a pilot, flight crew, or air traffic control employee who develops diabetes or has changes to your management (for example, a medication change) you must ground yourself, notify your Designated Aviation Medical Examiner (DAME) and await clearance.

- The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and DAME make assessment decisions on a case-by-case basis considering current management and the presence of complications.
- Flight cabin crew with diabetes requiring insulin are assessed individually by the airline's medical advisor and the person's own endocrinologist. Work may be restricted to multi-crewed flights with commercial airlines.
- To become a pilot, you must reveal your diabetes and provide as much information about your condition as possible. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- For further information, contact CASA: www.casa.gov.au



Jobs considered hazardous

Jobs may be restricted when considered hazardous for your own and co-worker's safety if a hypo can occur.

- If you are required to use hazardous machinery or substances as part of your job it is recommended that your diabetes management and complication status be reviewed by your endocrinologist or treating doctor.
- Hazardous forms of work can be affected by low or high blood glucose levels, complications of diabetes and some prescription medications.
- Other jobs that may be considered hazardous include working at heights, exposure to violence, transporting hazardous substances, or jobs in extreme weather or conditions. Most of these jobs assess health conditions on a case-by-case basis.



If you are at risk of hypos, you must take regular food breaks and monitor your blood glucose levels regularly. For more information about medical fitness for specific jobs, seek information directly with the industry of interest or contact Diabetes SA for further details.

Changing jobs and considering retirement

Most people newly diagnosed with diabetes can keep their current job.

- If your workplace is restricted or has a high safety risk when you are diagnosed with diabetes you may need to change jobs or positions. Your current employer is legally required to offer you another position.
- If you need to reduce your hours or stop working, it is important to find out what your rights are and seek legal advice before making decisions.
- The entitlements you receive may differ depending on how you leave work. Superannuation funds and insurance policies may offer disability payments or lifetime income protection benefits.
- If you are self-employed and must reduce or stop working you may need to consider engaging support, employing additional staff, handing over your business, or selling. Speaking with a company and financial advisor about your options is best.

You may consider retirement if your treatment changes or your health declines significantly.

- It is important to seek help from your medical team and a financial advisor about your situation before making decisions.
- You may also need social and emotional support to help with these major changes in your life.
- Always discuss your plans with your GP and health team so they can refer you to the best services available.



Talking about your diabetes

Telling your employer

For most jobs, it is not compulsory to tell your employer that you have diabetes, it is your personal choice.

Tip: It is recommended that you discuss your diabetes to ensure the following:

- Your safety in the workplace.
- Your colleague's safety in the workplace.
- Allowances, including extra breaks and flexibility for appointments.
- You are eligible for worker's compensation.
- All your insurance requirements can be fulfilled – if you have an accident at work because of diabetes. You may not be entitled to an insurance claim if you have not disclosed your condition.
- Consider how your diabetes may directly impact your duties and safety in the workplace when deciding whether to reveal your health condition.
- You will find that most employers will be very understanding and accommodating to your needs.



"I let my employer know about my diabetes at the interview, they were very supportive and simply asked what that meant day to day. I said that a ten second blood test and possibly fifteen minutes if I have a hypo was all that they would notice. I figure if I'm honest then they will offer me the same in response."

Evan, aged 32, living with type 1 diabetes for 27 years – working as a sales rep.

Informing your superannuation fund or insurance company

You may have to inform your superannuation fund or insurance company that you have diabetes, but terms and conditions will vary.

- You must check your fund's disclosure statement to determine what you are covered for and whether you need to tell the organisation about your diabetes.
- Check if you can join a superannuation fund without answering health questions.
- Insurance companies may require you to fill out a health questionnaire.
- Check what is required, as your insurance company may cancel a policy or a claim if you have not disclosed your diabetes diagnosis.

Telling your colleagues

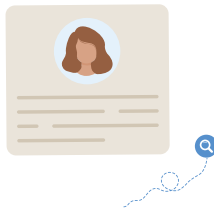
As well as telling your employer or manager, it is encouraged that you tell some of your close colleagues. This is important, so they understand diabetes and can offer their help when and if needed.

- You may need to provide a short explanation of diabetes and why you may need to take a break to check your blood glucose levels or inject insulin.
- If you are at risk of a hypo, it is good to have a few colleagues who understand how to help you if required.
- Please give them a Diabetes SA emergency information sheet for more information. Visit: www.diabetessa.com.au.

"I feel that not being afraid to share my diabetes with those around me, including those people I work with, having a sense of humour, understanding that it is normal in diabetes to have some low and high blood glucose levels has helped me to cope with the demands of managing this condition."

Rachel, aged 44, living with type 1 diabetes for 42 years – working as a Registered Nurse.

Wearing or carrying some form of medical identification is advisable but is a personal choice. This can be helpful in the event of an emergency, particularly if you have chosen not to discuss your diabetes with your colleagues or employer.



Rights and responsibilities

Your rights and responsibilities

You have rights and responsibilities that should be considered for yourself and others in the workplace, as with any medical condition.

Your rights

- To keep your medical history confidential.
- To retain your diabetes supplies and hypo treatment close by so you can access them when you need them (restock regularly).
- To store medications and insulin in an appropriate place.
- To have access to a clean and private place for blood glucose monitoring, taking medications and administering insulin.
- To take regular breaks (in addition to minimum) for snacks, blood glucose monitoring and taking medications or administering insulin.

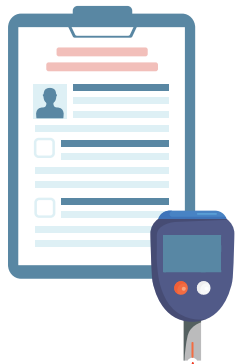
Your responsibilities

- To maintain your health and well-being, including hypo management.
- To provide a hypo kit and instructions for use in your workplace.
- Dispose of sharps in a certified sharps container so as not to put other people at risk.
- If your employer requires, provide a letter from your endocrinologist regarding your diabetes management.

Your responsibility is to manage your health and well-being in the workplace with adjustments to workplace conditions.

Managing your health at work

- Monitor blood glucose levels and administer medication, if required, in a clean, safe, and private area.
- Have regular breaks to eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise and/or move regularly.
- Have regular medical check-ups with an endocrinologist or treating doctor.
- If you require advice about managing your diabetes, your treating doctor and diabetes team of health professionals can support you.



Discrimination

Your employer is responsible for preventing discrimination against you or any employees living with diabetes.

It is a legal responsibility to treat employees fairly and protect them from discrimination. Discrimination in the workplace can be unintentional or intentional and generally occurs because employers and other employees do not understand diabetes and how it is managed.

There are different types of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination is when someone is unfairly treated because of their disability.
- In contrast, indirect discrimination can happen if someone is disadvantaged by a policy, system, or requirement. Indirect discrimination is only against the law when it is unreasonable.
- Diabetes is considered a disability under the state **Equal Opportunity Act (SA) 1984** and the **Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992**.
- It is against the law to discriminate against a person with a disability in the workplace.
- The term disability defined in the Act is broad and encompasses diabetes. It includes the behaviours linked to a disability, such as the signs and symptoms of hypoglycaemia in the workplace.

Discrimination examples

- Refusing to employ a person after a medical examination identifies a diabetes diagnosis.
- Unnecessarily or unfairly limiting a person's job responsibilities because they live with diabetes.
- An employer unwilling to accommodate the need for extra breaks for the employer to monitor blood glucose levels or administer insulin.
- An employer unwilling to provide a clean and private location for an employee to take medications or administer insulin.

Your employer does have the right to request information

An employer is able to question your ability to perform necessary tasks in the workplace. You may be required to provide a letter from your endocrinologist or treating doctor that declares your fitness to carry out work tasks safely.

Your employer's rights and responsibilities

Employer rights

- To determine if you are suitable for a job based on merit or job description.
- To control, direct and monitor work performance.
- To give legitimate comments on performance or work-related behaviour.
- To request a medical report from your endocrinologist or treating doctor to determine your fitness and safety to undergo required tasks.

Employer responsibilities

- To ensure the health and safety of all employees in the workplace.
- To ensure confidentiality and respect for all employees in the workplace.
- To prevent discrimination in the workplace.
- To provide reasonable workplace adjustments within financial capacity of the business.

Workplace adjustments may include:

- Accommodating (including a clean and private location) your need for extra breaks for snacks, blood glucose monitoring, hypoglycaemia treatment, taking medications or administering insulin.
- Flexibility to accommodate your medical appointments.
- Access to enlarged computer screens if you have impaired vision.
- Access to safe sharps disposal or medical waste.
- Access to a first aid kit and emergency hypoglycaemia prevention and treatment provisions at your workstation.

Funds for workplace adjustments

The Australian government provides employers funds to help with workplace adjustment costs under the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) and Job Access advisors.
<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>

Safety in the workplace

Driving

You may drive a commercial vehicle for work. This includes drivers of heavy vehicles, public passenger vehicles or bulk dangerous goods vehicles.

Driving a workplace vehicle or company car

If you drive a workplace vehicle or company car you should inform your employer of your diabetes to ensure that all insurance requirements have been met.

Informing the Driver’s License Authority (DLA)

There are some medical standards for driving when you live with diabetes.

- You are required to inform the driver's license authority of a medical condition that could affect your ability to drive.
- You can inform the DLA when you are newly diagnosed, or when applying for, or renewing your licence.
- You may require a conditional licence to continue driving when certain conditions are met to ensure your fitness to drive.



Diabetes management	Private vehicles	Commercial and all passenger vehicles
Diabetes when managed with diet and exercise alone.	May drive without licence restriction. Periodic review with a treating doctor is required.	May drive without licence restriction. A review is required regularly by an endocrinologist or consultant physician for the progression of diabetes.
Diabetes when treated with glucose lowering agents other than insulin.	A conditional licence is considered subject to periodic review with a treating doctor.	The DLA considers a conditional licence based on yearly assessments with an endocrinologist or consultant physician.
Diabetes when treated with insulin.	A conditional licence may be considered. Annual review with a treating doctor.	A conditional license may be considered by the DLA. At least a yearly review is required with an endocrinologist or diabetes physician.

Assessing fitness to drive 2022 available:<https://www.sa.gov.au>

“When I was first diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at the age of 22, I could drive on an unconditional licence. When I reached the age of 40, I required a conditional licence as I required corrective glasses for driving and reading. For the last 8 years, I have attended annual licensing reviews with my doctor. I have maintained a positive attitude towards my diabetes self-management and had no difficulties with renewal of my conditional driver’s licence.”

Sharon, aged 48, living with type 2 diabetes for 26 years – working as a Registered Nurse.

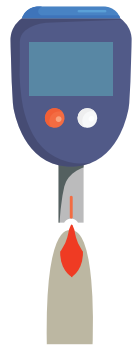
Don’t Drive Under Five

When driving, the main concern is an unexpected hypo for those who take insulin or particular glucose-lowering diabetes medications (i.e. sulphonylureas).

- You should check your blood glucose levels using a meter, CGM or Flash glucose monitor before driving.

Guide to preventing an unexpected hypo

1. Before turning on the car’s ignition, check your blood glucose level and ensure that you are above 5mmol/L before you drive.
2. Check your blood glucose levels every 2 hours to ensure you stay above 5mmol/L.
3. Always carry sugary food or drink (fast-acting carbohydrate) when driving.
4. If you suspect a hypo while driving, pull over safely, turn off the car (take the keys out of the ignition) and check your blood glucose level.
5. Manage the hypo (hypoglycaemia) with emergency steps.
6. Once your blood glucose level has risen above 5mmol/L, wait at least 30 minutes before driving again.



Recent severe hypos

There are guidelines for people who have suffered recent severe hypoglycaemia. Severe hypoglycaemia is an episode where someone else must help you to treat the hypo.

Guidelines for recent severe hypos

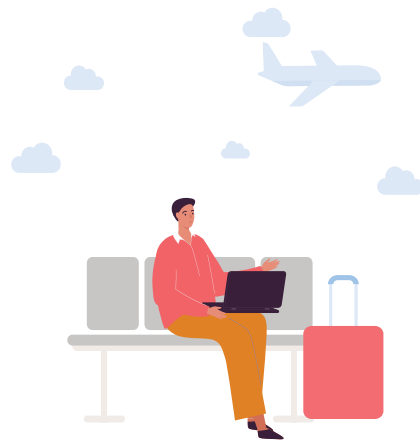
1. Stop driving, and wait until you have clearance to drive from your treating doctor. This period is variable.
2. Thoroughly review your blood glucose monitoring and/or diabetes management with your diabetes team.
3. Determine with your doctor if your awareness of hypoglycaemia episodes is reduced.

Travelling for work

Travelling interstate or overseas may be a requirement of your job. This should not be limited because you have diabetes.

With a plan, you can confidently travel anywhere without diabetes getting in the way.

- Take time to plan before you go on any trip.
- Be prepared in case of lost or damaged supplies or luggage and for unexpected delays, illness, and hypoglycaemia.
- Unexpected situations can be managed if you are prepared.
- Preparing for travel depends on your diabetes management, the type of travel, and whether you travel locally or overseas.



Things to consider before you travel

- 1. Have your diabetes supplies in your carry-on luggage.
- 2. Plan for adjusting medications for different time zones.
- 3. Have contact details of relevant diabetes services in case you need advice on local products or services.
- 4. If using a pump, carry a copy of the settings for reference.
- 5. Have a backup plan for an insulin pump or technology failure.
- 6. Carry a medic alert bracelet or similar.
- 7. Carry precise details of your family or next of kin.
- 8. Take details of your doctor and diabetes educator.
- 9. Plan immunisations with your doctor in advance.
- 10. Take out travel insurance and check conditions.



Shift work

Some jobs, such as those involving shift work and frequent travel may pose extra challenges when managing diabetes. However, with a good plan and a diabetes team behind you, anything is possible.

Shift work can impact your blood glucose levels due to various factors, including

- Changes in mealtimes.
- Changes in sleeping patterns.
- Changes in your body’s circadian rhythms.
- The body’s circadian rhythms include your sleep-wake cycle over 24 hours that regulate daily processes.
- When you start eating and sleeping at different times, your body’s circadian rhythms are disrupted and can impact your blood glucose levels. This may be due to working at night or changes in shifts.



If work involves night work, split shifts, or regular changes in shift times, discuss with your healthcare team so that you can better manage your blood glucose levels.

Shift work considerations

- Regular blood glucose monitoring to determine how your shifts impact your blood glucose levels.
- Talk to your diabetes team about insulin options that can provide more flexibility with meal timing and dose adjusting.
- Work with your diabetes team to adjust your insulin or medication doses to accommodate changes in your routine.
- Talk to your employer about the need for extra breaks for blood glucose monitoring and meals or snacks.

It is your employer’s responsibility to provide for your needs of extra breaks for snacks, blood glucose monitoring, hypo management, taking medications or administering insulin in a clean and private location.

Managing diabetes in the workplace

Managing your diabetes includes monitoring your blood glucose levels, managing medications or insulin, administering insulin, and managing low and high blood glucose levels in the workplace.



Monitoring blood glucose

Blood glucose monitoring is a quick and simple way to instantly inform you of your blood glucose level.

- You will likely need to monitor your blood glucose levels during work hours which should not impact daily work tasks.
- Some people may use continuous, or flash glucose monitoring devices to track their glucose levels.
- Many of these devices will alert you when your blood glucose levels drop or reach a certain level.
- You should monitor your blood glucose levels in your workspace or private location.

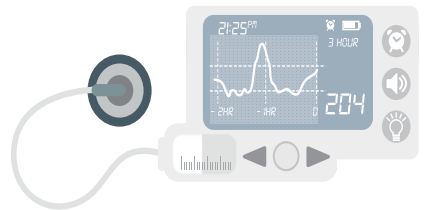
“To manage at work, I just make sure that I monitor my blood glucose levels regularly, have some food on hand for whenever I need it, and stop if I ever feel that I need to.”
Claire, aged 27, living with type 1 diabetes for 26 years – working as a personal trainer

Diabetes Technology

Some people living with diabetes manage with the aid of technology.

Insulin pumps

Insulin pumps are small electronic devices that are worn 24 hours a day. They are programmed to deliver a constant supply of insulin into the body through thin plastic tubing inserted under the skin. They can also be programmed to deliver extra insulin when carbohydrate foods are eaten or to correct high blood glucose levels.



Continuous glucose monitoring (CGM)

A CGM is a small device worn to measure glucose levels constantly and alerts with an alarm if glucose levels are above or below target levels. It reduces the need for finger prick monitoring and may be linked to a pump or smart phone.

Flash glucose monitoring

Flash glucose monitoring devices are small sensors worn on the back of the upper arm. A reader or smart phone is scanned over the sensor to provide a glucose reading. It reduces the need for finger prick monitoring. Some devices can provide alerts when glucose levels are above or below target levels.

Administering insulin or taking medication

You may need to take medication or administer insulin during work hours. Although you may be able to manage this independently, you may require:



- A safe and suitable storage place for insulin or medications.
- Access to a fridge to store spare insulin, if required.
- A suitable or private location to administer insulin.
- Access to a sharps container.
- Discussing your requirements with your employer will ensure that all your needs are met, and that you feel comfortable taking medications and administering insulin in the workplace.
- It is up to you whether you take medications or administer insulin in your workspace or do this in a suitable private location provided by your workplace.
- You should be given privacy and respect when monitoring your blood glucose levels and taking medication at work.
- Your employer cannot legally ask to see your blood glucose levels or diary.

Disposal of sharps

A sharp is any device used to penetrate the skin, including a finger pricking device or lancet, insulin syringes, pen needles used with insulin pens and needles used to insert insulin pump sets.

- Once a sharps device has been used, it should be disposed of in a sharps container.
- A sharps container is a non-reusable container that is rigid, leak-proof, puncture resistant and shatterproof with a tight-fitting lid.
- A sharps container should comply with Australian Standards.
- Once a sharps container is $\frac{3}{4}$ full, it must be sealed and disposed of in an approved sharps or medical waste bin.
- Contact your local council for your nearest location.
- Some employers may choose to provide sharps containers as a measure of work safety to control workplace risks.



Lifestyle factors

Eating and diabetes

Eating healthy food is essential when living with diabetes. Eating patterns are guided by the foods within the Australian Dietary Guidelines: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines> and recommendations for diabetes management.

- Healthy eating principles for people with diabetes will help manage blood glucose levels and provide essential nutrients for overall health and well-being.
- Carbohydrate foods, starchy or sugary, break down into glucose.
- The amount of carbohydrate foods a person should eat is different for everyone. Recommendations are based on weight, gender, age, activity level, eating patterns and blood glucose levels.
- Small amounts of natural sugar in a food or added to nutritious meals fit into a healthy balanced diet without significantly affecting your blood glucose levels.

- You may need to tell your employer that you require regular breaks to consume a snack to help manage your blood glucose levels.
- The need for breaks or keeping food close by will depend on your insulin and/or medication routine and particular needs to match insulin doses and carbohydrate foods.
- Fast acting carbohydrates may be required for treating hypos (glucose level 4mmol/L or below).



Physical activity

Keeping physically active and reducing sedentary behaviour is crucial to managing diabetes.

- Thirty minutes of moderate physical activity is recommended each day.
- Looking for opportunities to reduce sitting and increase incidental activity in the workplace is helpful.
- Head to exerciseright.com.au/exercise-right-work for ideas on incorporating movement into your work day.



Sleeping well

Getting enough sleep is necessary to restore energy and complete daily tasks.

- At least six hours each night is recommended.
- Working hours and flexibility that allow for adequate sleep is critical for good health and wellbeing.



Stress management

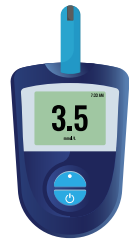
Stress is the body's normal response to any challenging or new situation. Some stress can be positive, helping us to feel motivated and overcome challenges. However too much stress can be detrimental to your health and make diabetes management more challenging.

- Hormones released during stress (adrenaline and cortisol) can lead to high blood glucose levels by increasing the release of stored glucose from the liver and increasing insulin resistance.
- Stress can also lead to changes in our behaviour that may impact health and wellbeing e.g. changes to eating and exercise routine, poor sleep and reduced motivation for diabetes self-management tasks (glucose monitoring, taking medication or insulin)
- Strategies such as exercise, eating well, social support and mindfulness or relaxation techniques can help with managing stress.
- Speak to your healthcare team for support in managing stressful periods.

Staying safe in the workplace

Managing low blood glucose levels

A hypo or low blood glucose level usually occurs as a direct side effect of insulin or specific diabetes oral medications used to manage diabetes.



Hypoglycemia or 'hypo' is defined as:

A blood glucose level of 4mmol/L or below, with or without symptoms.

There are many reasons why a hypo may occur. Generally it is due to an imbalance of insulin or certain oral medications with food or exercise, however, a hypo may occur for no reason at all.

Some causes include:

- Too much insulin or glucose-lowering diabetes medication.
- Missing or delaying a meal.
- Not eating enough carbohydrate foods.
- Drinking alcohol increases the risk of hypoglycaemia.
- Unplanned physical activity (a hypo can occur 12 hours after exercise).
- More vigorous exercise than normal.



If you are having a hypo, you will need to:

1. Stop work immediately and treat it, even if not symptomatic.
 2. Monitor blood glucose levels as often as you need.
 3. Take hypo treatment as required.
- Resume work tasks once your blood glucose levels rise above 4mmol/L and you have fully recovered or symptoms have resolved.
 - The impact of a hypo can take 30 minutes or longer to resolve – you should not resume work until you fully recover.

Managing a hypo (hypoglycaemia) at work

- Most people with diabetes can recognise their body's warning signs for a hypo, and you may be able to manage a hypo without needing help from others.
- Some people don't experience symptoms of a hypo. They may be 'hypo unaware'. For more information see page 21.
- Trained colleagues should be able to help.
- Colleagues and employers that you have decided to inform should know the following:

If you are ever looking drowsy, are unable to eat or drink or become unconscious this is an emergency – **Call an Ambulance on 000 immediately.**

A hypo should always be treated as a medical emergency.

Diabetes Emergency Information

Hypoglycaemia – Blood Glucose Levels less than 4.0 mmol/L

SYMPTOMS

Watch for symptoms of hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Sweating | • Irritability | • Blurred vision | • Poor concentration / mood changes |
| • Tingling/numb lips | • Drowsiness | • Slurred speech | • Tearful / crying |
| • Weakness | • Light headiness / dizziness | • Fast heart beat | |
| • Headache | • Disorientation | • Nausea | |
| • Hunger | | | |



If the person is unconscious, unable to swallow, fitting or drowsy get emergency help immediately!

Call an Ambulance 000

If the person is conscious and able to swallow, stay with them and proceed to Step 1.

EMERGENCY ACTION

Step 1

If the person has a blood glucose level of 4 mmol/L or below give 15 g of quick acting carbohydrate. The person may require assistance or encouragement to eat and drink.

15 g of quick acting carbohydrate is equivalent to one of the following:



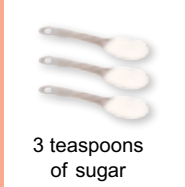
6-7 standard jelly beans



150 ml of regular soft drink (1/2 regular can)



Glucose tablets equivalent to 15 g



3 teaspoons of sugar



150 ml of fruit juice (1/2 glass)

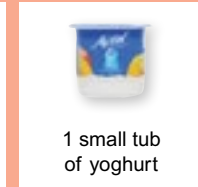
Step 2

If the next meal is more than 20 minutes away, give the person 15 g of longer acting carbohydrate.

This is equivalent to one of the following:



A slice of wholemeal or multigrain bread



1 small tub of yoghurt



1 piece of fruit



1 glass of milk or soy milk



If in doubt, treat.



WAIT 10-15 minutes, and then monitor blood glucose levels. If levels are not above 4 mmol/L repeat step 1. If they are above 4 mmol/L continue to step 2.



WAIT, and ensure the person has recovered fully before continuing with usual activities.

Diabetes emergency information.

The hypo Kit

If you are at risk of a hypo, you must provide a 'hypo kit' for your workplace. You and your colleagues should always have access to a hypo kit.

A hypo kit may include the following:

- A hypoglycaemia emergency information sheet.
- Quick-acting carbohydrates such as jellybeans, regular soft drinks, or glucose tablets.
- Long-acting carbohydrates such as muesli bars or small packets of dry biscuits or crackers.
- Ensure the contents of your hypo kit are always within their use-by date.
- A 'hypo' sticker can identify to your colleagues the location of your 'hypo kit' if needed. Contact Diabetes SA to get a hypo kit sticker for your workplace.

Diabetes
SA Support
Always

Hypo Kit



Treating with Glucagon

A severe hypo may result in loss of consciousness or inability to swallow food and fluid safely.

The way to manage a severe hypo is by injecting the hormone glucagon that releases stored glucose from your liver into your bloodstream.

- Glucagon is given by a medically trained person as an injection into your muscle. It is given when someone is unable to swallow or is unconscious.
- This restores blood glucose levels within 10 minutes. The hormone will work for approximately 30 minutes, enabling you to consume some carbohydrate food or drinks by mouth to reverse the hypoglycaemia.



Glucagon should only be administered by a medically trained person.

Frequent hypos

You may be experiencing hypo episodes often, affecting your ability to carry out regular workplace responsibilities.

- If so, your employer can request that you have an assessment from your endocrinologist or treating doctor to determine your fitness to carry out duties as described in your position description.
- Speak with your diabetes healthcare team for support in maintaining frequent hypos.



If you work in a job with safety concerns, you may require personal or sick leave or a change to your role. Your work duties may need to cease or change until you are deemed medically fit by your endocrinologist or treating doctor to resume full duties.



Hypo unawareness

Hypo unawareness or low blood glucose levels without symptoms is when you do not feel or recognise the symptoms of a hypo.

- Being unaware of a hypo puts you at high risk of severe episodes that can lead to unconsciousness, seizures, accidents or even death.
- You may have been living with diabetes for many years and experience frequent hypoglycaemia. In that case, you may be at higher risk of hypo unawareness. Blood glucose levels can become low without you knowing, putting you and others at risk.
- If you are at risk of having a hypo or think you may be hypo unaware at times, it is recommended that you tell someone in the workplace. This is important if you work in a hazardous or safety-sensitive job.
- You should tell a trusted colleague, first aid officer or human resources person what to expect and how to best help.
- Hypos can be mild so that you can treat them yourself, or they may become severe, where you require assistance.



Provide colleagues with hypo emergency information and tell them to be aware if a severe hypo occurs to:

- Call for an ambulance 000.
- State it is a diabetes emergency.
- Follow diabetes emergency information.
- Never try to feed an unconscious or semi-conscious person as it may lead to choking.



The risk of experiencing a hypo at work depends on your diabetes management, medications, and the type of work that you do.

If you are operating heavy machinery or driving, the potential consequence of a hypo is greater than sitting at a desk to complete your duties.

- You must take a regular meal or snack break if at risk of hypoglycaemia.
- Monitor your blood glucose levels regularly and have hypo treatment available.

If you experience hypo unawareness, it is vital to consider if it is safe to continue in your current role and complete your required workplace duties. It is recommended that you discuss this with your endocrinologist or treating doctor.

If hypo unawareness impacts your ability to complete your duties as part of your job description you may be able to discuss this with your employer:

- Consider alternative roles and responsibilities that you could undertake within your workplace. At the same time, you should plan with your endocrinologist or treating doctor to regain your hypo awareness.

Tips for staying safe

Managing diabetes safely in the workplace may require planning and support from your employer, colleagues, and diabetes team.

Some considerations include the following:

- Seek advice to discuss your diabetes with your current or potential employers if you are unsure.
- Discuss the need to adjust your insulin or oral medication dose with your endocrinologist or treating doctor if your activity levels are higher or lower at work than usual.
- Take opportunities to monitor your blood glucose levels and eat if required.
- Keep a well-stocked 'hypo kit' in your workplace (check that your hypo treatment is within the use-by date).
- Monitor blood glucose levels before driving and ensure you are above 5mmol/L.
- Dispose of sharps in a sharps container.
- If you feel like you are experiencing hypoglycaemia – stop working to manage it.
- If you do shift work or travel regularly, discuss adjustments to your insulin or medication routine that you may require with your treating doctor or diabetes team.



Managing sick days

Being unwell can make managing diabetes more challenging. Illness can lead to both high and low glucose levels depending on the type of illness and your symptoms. Speak to your healthcare team about a sick day management plan so you know what to do when unwell.

Type 1 diabetes sick day checklist

- Follow your sick day action plan and use a sick day kit.
- Tell someone about being unwell.
- Check blood glucose levels more often.
- Check for ketones.
- Always take insulin, and expect to increase the dose.
- Seek help – see your doctor or contact your diabetes educator.
- Drink plenty of fluids and keep eating (if possible).
- Seek urgent medical care if needed.



Type 2 diabetes sick day checklist

- Follow your sick day action plan and use a sick day kit.
- Tell someone about being unwell.
- If on insulin or self-monitoring, check blood glucose levels more often.
- Keep taking diabetes medications or insulin doses if directed by your doctor.
- If taking insulin, expect to increase your dose(s).
- Seek help – see your doctor or contact your diabetes educator.
- Drink plenty of fluids and keep eating (if possible).
- Seek urgent medical care, if needed.
- If you don't have a sick day action plan contact your diabetes educator or call Diabetes SA on 1300 198 204.

High blood glucose and complications

High blood glucose levels

Every person with diabetes will occasionally experience high blood glucose levels (BGL) > 15mmol/L. There are many reasons why this may occur, and everyone experiences different causes for rising blood glucose levels.



Causes of hyperglycaemia may include:

- Emotional and mental stress, e.g. financial, personal or workplace.
- Physical stresses, e.g. injury, illness, infection, or pain.
- Not enough medication or forgetting your insulin or oral medication dose.
- Not enough insulin or blood glucose-lowering medication to match your carbohydrate food and drink intake.
- Interactions with other medications, such as blood pressure and steroid medications.
- Less physical activity than usual.
- Sometimes, hyperglycaemia may occur for no obvious reason.

Symptoms of hyperglycaemia may be experienced when blood glucose levels are above 15mmol/L.

Symptoms may include:

- Thirst increased
- Toileting increased (often passing urine to remove excess glucose)
- Tiredness
- Blurred vision
- Infections re-occurring
- Feeling generally unwell.

You may be well enough to continue working when you experience hyperglycaemia.

However, if you start to feel very unwell and/or begin to vomit, you should seek medical attention immediately.

Tips for managing hyperglycaemia at work:

- Monitor your BGL's more regularly
- Consider ketone testing with type 1 diabetes
- Drink plenty of water
- Discuss the management of hyperglycaemia with your diabetes team and ensure you have a sick day management plan in place.

Complications

Long-term high blood glucose levels can lead to diabetes-related complications such as:

- Eye problems – retinopathy can cause vision changes and blindness.
- Nerve damage can occur anywhere – neuropathy; can cause changes to sensation and amputations.
- Kidney problems – nephropathy; can cause kidney damage or failure.
- Heart and blood vessel damage – cardiovascular disease; can cause a heart attack or stroke.
- Psychological conditions – can lead to depression, anxiety, or diabetes distress.

Diabetes may lead to complications, although in most cases these can be prevented or managed.



Tips for managing complications may be helpful and can include practical workplace strategies.

These may include:

- Wearing protective footwear.
- Avoid long periods of standing.
- Large computer screens.
- Taking annual leave when needed.

The benefits of working and managing diabetes so it can fit in with your life are important. A happy and healthy working environment is critical and supports a good work–life balance.

Speak with your diabetes healthcare team or contact Diabetes SA for further information and support.

Diabetes SA can provide education and support to assist you to manage diabetes safely in the workplace and achieve a good work-life balance. Call 1300 198 204 for more information.



Contacts for information and help

Pathway for information and further help

You can seek specific diabetes-related information from Diabetes SA.

If you belong to a Worker's Union, you can use their resources as you will not be eligible for the free industrial services through the Australian Commission.

Diabetes SA

Information about diabetes detection, prevention, and management in the South Australian workplace.

Individualised support with your diabetes management.

T: 08 8234 1977

E: info@diabetessa.com.au

W: www.diabetessa.com.au

Diabetes Australia & the NDSS Helpline

Information about diabetes in general and the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS).

T: 1800 637 700

W: www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

Fair Work Ombudsman

Information and advice about Australia's workplace rights and rules (e.g. wages, breaks, flexible hours, rosters, work health and safety).

T: 13 13 94

W: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Commission South Australian Office

Information and advice about Australia's workplace rights and rules (including unfair dismissal/ termination, harassment or bullying and discrimination in the workplace).

T: 1300 799 675

E: adelaide@fwc.gov.au

W: www.fwc.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Commission

Information and advice about equality of opportunity in the South Australian community and prevention of discrimination based on sex, race, disability, age or other grounds.

T: 08 8207 1977 or for Country Callers on 1800 188 163 – leave a message and you will receive a call back

E: OCEO@sa.gov.au

W: www.eoc.sa.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

For information and complaints relating to discrimination and human rights breaches.

T: 1300 656 419 (National Information Service)

E: infoservice@humanrights.gov.au

W: humanrights.gov.au

Job Access

Australian Government Department of Social Services funded service providing workplace information for people with a disability, employers and service providers.

T: 1800 464 800

W: www.jobaccess.gov.au

Legal Services Commission of SA

Free legal advice for minor assistance, telephone advice line and appointments.

T: 1300 366 424

E: www.lsc.sa.gov.au

SafeWork SA

Information about work, health and safety.

T: 1300 365 255

W: www.safework.sa.gov.au



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Send info@diabetessa.com.au **Click** diabetessa.com.au