



## Managing your *diabetes* in the face of the COVID-19 threat

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. The severity of infection may range from a mild illness (most common) to a severe pneumonia needing critical care. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly. Symptoms are flu-like and include fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person, but good hygiene can prevent infection.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is scary for everyone, and even more so if you are perceived as vulnerable due to older age or having a chronic health condition like diabetes. However, our response as individuals should be measured according to the facts we know and we should avoid panic.

### Things you CAN control, mostly involving *social distancing* and *good hygiene*

1. *Avoid air travel*, both local, and more specifically, international.
2. *Wash hands regularly with soap and water* throughout the day. Use *hand sanitizer* (containing at least 70% alcohol) if necessary.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with *unwashed hands* and *wash your hands* after touching your face.
4. *Clean and disinfect any objects and surfaces* that are touched frequently.
5. *Don't share* food, glasses, towels, tools etc. to avoid sharing viruses like COVID-19.
6. When you cough or sneeze, *cover your mouth and nose* with a tissue (dispose of the tissue appropriately after use), or use the crook of your arm if you don't have a tissue at hand.
7. Try to *avoid contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness* such as coughing.
8. *Avoid crowds*, busy shopping centres and functions.
9. Look after *your mind*. Keep in touch with friends and family. Do not isolate yourself mentally.
10. Know the *symptoms* of COVID-19 and what to do. The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) General Public Hotline number is +27 (0) 800 029 999 (Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 16h00).
11. Ensure that you always have *sufficient supplies* to test your blood glucose and medication to control your diabetes. Try to *keep your blood glucose as close to normal as possible*. High blood glucose levels will *impair your immune system*.
12. Know your *sick day rules* and *contact your diabetes team sooner rather than later* for advice and assistance.

### Things you CANNOT control

Unfortunately, at this time, there is no vaccine for this virus and no medical prevention. The fact that you have diabetes may make you more vulnerable to becoming unwell if you do catch the virus. Try not to be overwhelmed and caught up in other people's panic. Get your news and facts from reliable sources and try to avoid scare stories and false news promulgated by some of the media.

It is not your fault if you catch COVID-19. Do not blame yourself.

**AGAIN, WASH YOUR HANDS... OFTEN!**