



KEEPING COOL

By Martha Funnell, MS, RN, CDE

As winter ends, the longer days and the appeal of sunshine motivates many people to spend more time outside and to become more active. If you have diabetes, being more active can make it easier to keep your blood glucose levels in your target range. But as with so many things in diabetes, you do need to take care to protect yourself—especially on very warm days and when it is humid. If you are traveling this summer, you also need to make plans to keep your medicines and other supplies safe.

1 DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS

Keeping hydrated is one of the most important things you can do to keep yourself safe in the summer. Some people find their blood glucose levels are higher when it's hot and humid. Drinking plenty of sugar-free fluids is one way to flush the extra sugar from your body and to keep your blood glucose levels on target.

If you exercise outside in the summer, carry a bottle of water with you. This is true even if you are working in your yard or garden. Drink enough fluid to replace the amount that you lose by sweating. One sign that you are dehydrated may be cramps when you are exercising. Other signs are dry mouth and lips, needing to urinate less often and dark urine. There is no set amount of water or other liquids you need to drink, but if your urine is clear and pale yellow, you are well hydrated.

You will also need extra fluid if you are taking a long airplane flight. The air can

be very drying. You will feel less tired and jet-lagged if you stay hydrated. Be sure to keep all of your medicines, your meter and its strips with you on the plane and not in your checked bag. The temperatures in the luggage compartment vary a great deal and can be either too hot or too cold. Plus, keeping your supplies with you prevents problems if your luggage gets lost.

2 KEEP YOUR MEDICINES COOL AND DRY

It is safe to store your insulin at room temperature as long as it is less than 86° in the room. If it is hotter than that in your house, keep all bottles of insulin in the refrigerator. If cold insulin stings when you take it, you can roll the bottle between the palms of your hands to warm it slightly before taking your dose. Avoid storing your insulin on a windowsill or a counter in direct sunlight.

Don't leave your insulin in your car for any period of time. The inside of a car and especially the trunk can quickly go over 100° on a hot day. Most of the time, you can keep your insulin pen or vials in your purse or pockets when you are away from home and will need them. When taking a long car trip in the summer, keep your insulin in a cooler, but do not put it in ice or allow it to touch an ice pack. If insulin freezes

at all, it no longer works.

Make sure that the lids are tightly closed on your pill bottles to protect them when it is humid.

3 PROTECT YOUR METER AND STRIPS

For the most accurate results, store your meter at room temperature. Most companies recommend that meters be kept between 40 and 86°. High altitudes can also affect your meter. Humidity can damage your strips, so store them in the original bottle and make sure the lid is on tight.

4 PROTECT YOUR SKIN

- Wear a hat and sunscreen when you are outside to protect your skin. Along with the risk of skin cancer, sunburn is a physical stress and can raise your blood glucose levels.
- As part of protecting your skin, you need to protect your feet. Be sure to put sunscreen on the tops of your feet if you are at the beach.
- Wear shoes at the beach and when swimming in the sea. Use common sense about wearing sandals and make sure they fit well and give you the protection you need.
- If you have neuropathy or any numb areas on your feet, shoes that offer more protection and support than sandals will be a safer choice.

DID YOU KNOW?

SPF 15

A sunscreen with SPF 15 blocks about 93% of the harmful rays and is enough protection for most people.

SPF 30

If you are very fair or burn easily, you may need to use SPF 30.