

Working shifts safely with diabetes

Cornerstones4Care®

Working 'round the clock

Doing shift work means that you're working outside daylight hours. You may be working evenings. Or you may work the midnight shift.

Managing diabetes while working shifts can be a challenge. But with some thought, education, and a plan, you can do it!



Talk with your diabetes care team

Let your team—your doctor, nurse, dietitian, and the others in your doctor's office—know what kind of work you will be doing and what your hours will be. Talk together about what changes, if any, need to be made to your current diabetes care. For example, you may need to take your medicines at different times. Or you may need to take different medicines that fit better with your new schedule. Put a written plan in place. Then share your plan with your employer.

Know your rights

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that most employers make arrangements for people with diabetes. (Some employers, such as those with few employees, may not have to follow the terms of the act.) For example, you may need:

- Regular breaks to eat or drink, test your blood sugar, or take medicine
- A private area to test your blood sugar or to take injectable diabetes medicine
- A place to rest if you have low blood sugar

Be honest with your employer about what accommodations you need.



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Pay particular attention to the possibility of changes in blood sugar

When you work shifts, you may be eating, sleeping, and active at different times. That may cause changes in blood sugar. Ask your diabetes care team what you can do to decrease the risk of high blood sugar.



To reduce your risk of low blood sugar on the job

- Check your blood sugar often. Don't rely on symptoms (like weakness, hunger, or dizziness) to tell you if your blood sugar is low. Be especially careful to check often when you are changing work shifts to see how the changes affect your blood sugar.



Ask your diabetes care team how often you should check.

- Make sure you have what you need at work to treat low blood sugar. Keep a supply of the following:
 - Regular fruit juice, such as orange, apple, or grape (you'll want to drink a ½ cup)
 - Regular soda, not diet (again, a ½ cup)
 - 3 or 4 glucose tablets
 - 5 to 6 hard candies that you can chew quickly (such as mints)



Let your coworkers know where your supply is located

- Wear medical identification so coworkers who don't know you can help you if you need it
- Make sure to let your diabetes care team know about any episodes of low blood sugar you might experience

For more information, visit Cornerstones4Care.com

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