

Yom Kippur & diabetes

For people with diabetes:

While certain groups are not expected to fast during Yom Kippur (e.g., young children, elderly people, pregnant and nursing women, and people who are ill or who could become ill as a result of fasting), some people with ongoing health conditions choose to fast on Yom Kippur. Fasting may affect the management of several health conditions, including diabetes.

Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body doesn't produce or properly use insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas that converts glucose from food into energy. This leads to raised blood glucose levels which may damage various organs and tissues over time.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce insulin. **Type 2 diabetes** occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin, or insulin does not work effectively. **Gestational diabetes** can occur during pregnancy, and usually goes away after the baby is born.

In 2009-10, 7% of the ACT population was ever diagnosed with diabetes or high blood glucose. However, for every person diagnosed with diabetes in the community there is probably one undiagnosed person, so around 13% people of the ACT might have diabetes.

People with diabetes may have different physical responses to fasting during Yom Kippur, depending on the type of

diabetes and how it is usually managed (e.g., with insulin, other medicines such as metformin, or diet).

The most common complications are hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels), hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose levels), diabetic ketoacidosis (when the body burns fat for energy instead of glucose, resulting in dangerous chemicals building up in the blood), and dehydration and thrombosis (abstaining from water and other liquids can result in dehydration; this may increase the risk of blood clots and stroke).

In some instances, the safest choice may be not to fast (e.g., people with type 1 diabetes and pregnant women with diabetes).

However, **some people with diabetes can reduce their risk of problems during Yom Kippur by making small changes to their usual practices**, such as eating a low carbohydrate, high-protein meal with lots of vegetables when they break their fast.

Before Yom Kippur begins, people with diabetes should speak to their usual health professional/s about their fasting practices. If you do fast, you may need to change your diabetes medicine or eating and exercise plan.

If you feel unwell during Yom Kippur, you should contact your general practitioner (GP) or the emergency department of your nearest hospital.



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Multicultural Health Policy Unit
Email: multiculturalhealth@act.gov.au
Phone: 02 6205 1011