

# Diabetic kids can still enjoy Christmas treats if parents take special care

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Indulgences abound during the holidays—from family gatherings to parties with friends and even stockings stuffed with goodies from Santa. For children with diabetes, overindulging on the delicacies of the season could result in more than a stomachache, it could mean a trip to the emergency room.

"It's extremely important for parents to communicate with their [child](#) during the [holidays](#) to ensure the festivities are fun but also safe," said Himala Kashmiri, DO, pediatric endocrinologist at Loyola University Health System and assistant professor of pediatrics at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "Diabetes doesn't mean your child can't enjoy the foods of the season. It just means you have to be prepared and communicate with your child about how to control blood sugar."

He suggested parents check their child's blood sugar more often during the holidays and, if the numbers seem high, to look for ketones in the urine. Ketone tests are available at your pharmacy. They are simple, but for best results follow instructions carefully.

"How often a parent checks their child's blood sugar can vary, but during the holidays it's especially important to check before every meal and in certain situations before snacks. Checking four to six times per day during the holidays is a good idea, keeping in mind that the frequency might even be higher depending on your child's blood sugar readings," Kashmiri said.

Though parents need to ensure their child is safe, too many restrictions may lead to a child sneaking food, which can become dangerous if the child is not protected with insulin. Being aware of what a child eats allows the parents to respond with appropriate medication.

"There is a misconception that a child with [diabetes](#) has to avoid sweets. That's not true. Children with diabetes just need insulin to help them process the food. Make sure your children know that they need to tell you if they are eating certain foods so you can give them an appropriate amount of insulin," Kashmiri said. "If you keep the communication lines open and help the child know you are on the same team, a child will be less likely to sneak snacks, which can cause extreme elevations in blood sugar. You'll want to closely monitor blood sugar but also make sure they can have fun."

In addition to checking [blood sugar levels](#), look for signs of low or [high blood sugar](#). Signs of [low blood sugar](#) include:

- Extreme hunger
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Shakiness
- Pale skin color
- Weakness
- Headache

Signs of high [blood sugar](#) include:

- Drinking a lot of fluids
- Urinating frequently
- Fatigue
- Feeling "not right"
- Abdominal pain

- Vomiting

If your child is unable to hold down fluids and food, make an appointment with a physician as soon as possible. If high urine ketones are present, your child may need to increase the frequency of insulin, drink more fluids, and/or go to the [emergency room](#) if the urine ketones level does not improve.

"During the holidays parents should keep a closer eye on what is happening with their child's diabetes, but it's also important that the child be able to experience all the joys of the holidays," Kashmiri said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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