

SAFE FASTING PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES



Diabetes care and education specialists have the opportunity to help people with diabetes who choose to fast do so in a safe and healthy way. This material reviews general considerations for fasting when working with clients.



The following are some characteristics considered *higher risk* for safety concerns during fasting:

- Glucose levels out of target range
- History of disordered eating patterns
- History of hypoglycemia or hypoglycemia unawareness
- Renal insufficiency, advanced CKD, on dialysis
- Participates in intense physical activity
- History of HHS within the past 3 months
- Takes insulin
- Lives alone
- Is of advanced age or frail
- Is pregnant
- Has an acute illness
- Has advanced complications

Planning for the fast

Assessment is the first step in individualizing a safe plan for fasting. Here are 2 initial questions to get your assessment started:

1. What worked or didn't work with previous fasting?
2. What do they anticipate to be the biggest challenge with fasting attempts?

Using the ADCES7 Self-Care Behaviors® framework provides a structured way to organize your assessment and determine appropriate strategies and interventions for the fasting plan.

1. HEALTHY EATING

Assess:

- » Eating habits-typical eating and hunger symptoms and patterns
- » Reason for fasting
- » Type and length of fast
- » History of disordered eating
- » Previous attempts at weight reduction
- » Screen for food insecurity



2. BEING ACTIVE

Assess:

- » How fasting will affect the ability to maintain physical activity

3. MONITORING

Assess:

- » Glucose patterns in conjunction with eating, physical activity, and medications to identify needs during fast
- » Hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia management
- » Need for increased checks during fast

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4. PROBLEM-SOLVING

Assess:

- » Times or situations that may pose challenges for the person
- » When it may be necessary to break a fast, such as for a high or low glucose level or an acute illness
- » Usual symptoms and their plan for treating hypo/hyperglycemia
- » Willingness to do a trial fast

5. REDUCING RISK

Assess:

- » A1C, recent and past glucose levels
- » History of DKA, renal insufficiency, and complications
- » Financial risk factors
- » High fall risk factors

6. HEALTHY COPING

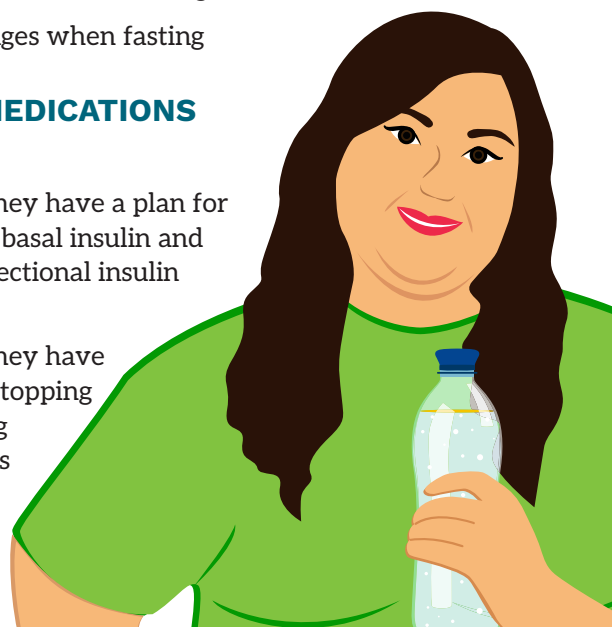
Assess:

- » Support system that will be in place during the fast
- » Impact of fast on self-management
- » Mood changes when fasting

7. TAKING MEDICATIONS

Assess:

- » Whether they have a plan for continuing basal insulin and giving correctional insulin if needed
- » Whether they have a plan for stopping or adjusting medications



Potential Strategies and Interventions

- ☐ Help them to establish a support system to check in with them during their fast.
- ☐ Reinforce the importance of reviewing their fasting strategy with their entire healthcare team.
- ☐ Familiarize them with the signs and symptoms indicating an urgent problem during a fast that requires medical attention.
- ☐ Emphasize the adequate amount of water and unsweetened, caffeine-free beverages that can help minimize dehydration.
- ☐ Review their typical eating and hunger patterns to assess key times or situations that may pose challenges (times of day, family meals, group events, etc).
- ☐ Review hunger and glucose patterns with eating and physical activity in preparation for adjustments that

may be necessary during the fast. Instruct them on how often to check glucose during the fast.

- ☐ Develop a plan to address factors that may contribute to higher fall risk, such as polypharmacy, dehydration, hypoglycemia, and orthostatic hypotension.
- ☐ Consider a trial fast for different times of the day to closely monitor and track glucose trends:
 - » Check glucose before a fast, when symptoms occur during a fast, and every 2-3 hours during a trial fast
 - » Review these trends based on timing in the day and assess for high or low glucose levels and other risks
 - » If successful, do a trial during a different part of the day
 - » If issues occur, consider potential solutions and if it is safe for the individual to do another trial with alterations

There are a variety of reasons a person may choose to fast, such as for a procedure, for weight loss, or for religious reasons. Diabetes care and education specialists play an integral role in helping clients to get through the fasting period safely.