When you're losing fluid

Losing fluid from diarrhoea, vomiting or a fever? Here is what to do, and a plan to fill in with your GP or pharmacist before you are ill. From the film “He Never Missed a Tablet”.

Call 999 if someone:

- collapses and cannot be woken within 1 minute
- has fainted and has not fully recovered
- is confused
- is sleepier than normal or difficult to wake

Call 111 if you:

- keep being sick and cannot keep fluids down
- are peeing less than normal
- feel dizzy when you stand up and it does not go away
- have diarrhoea for more than 7 days, or vomiting for more than 2 days

If you have diabetes, call 999 if you:

- have a high level of ketones – over 3mmol/L in your blood, or over 2+ in your pee
- do not know your ketone levels but have symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis, such as feeling thirsty and needing to pee more often, feeling sleepy or confused, and breath that smells fruity (like pear drop sweets or nail polish remover)
- take metformin and think you might have lactic acidosis, with symptoms such as being sick, stomach pain and muscle cramps, and breathing problems

Fainted, but fully recovered? See a GP to find out what might have caused it.

Four steps when you're losing fluid

1. **Sip fluids.** Take small sips often if you feel sick, then gradually drink more. A pharmacist can recommend an oral rehydration solution.
2. **Use your own sick-day plan.** Check which medicines your plan says to pause while you're losing fluid, and which to keep taking. If you use insulin, keep taking it and follow your insulin sick-day instructions.
3. **Know when to get help.** Use the 999 and 111 boxes. Avoid loperamide if C. diff is suspected or confirmed, or if you have severe diarrhoea after taking antibiotics.
4. **Restart as your plan says.** Restart once you're eating and drinking normally, as your own plan says. If you've been seriously ill in hospital, follow your hospital team's restart instructions.

Medicines to ask about

Your plan may name some of these. Your GP or pharmacist will tell you which apply to you; not everyone pauses all of them.

- **Metformin**, for type 2 diabetes
- **SGLT-2 inhibitors**, names ending in -flozin, such as dapagliflozin
- **ACE inhibitors**, names ending in -pril, such as ramipril or lisinopril
- **ARBs**, such as losartan or candesartan
- **Water tablets (diuretics)**, such as furosemide or indapamide
- **Anti-inflammatory painkillers (NSAIDs)**, such as ibuprofen or naproxen, including ones you buy

Insulin: keep taking it, even if you're not eating. Follow your insulin sick-day instructions.

Never start, stop, or change prescribed medication without consulting your doctor or prescriber.

UK health education only. Not personal medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. In a life-threatening emergency call 999 or go to A&E. If you need medical help urgently, or are not sure where to go, use NHS 111 online or call 111. For other concerns contact your GP.
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My sick-day plan

Fill this in with your GP or pharmacist before you are ill. Bring all your medicines, including any you buy yourself. Keep it where your family can find it.

My name: _____ **Agreed with:** _____ **Date:** _____

My medicine	When I'm losing fluid: pause, or keep taking?	When and how to restart

If I use insulin, my insulin sick-day instructions:

_____

_____

_____

Who to ring

My GP surgery _____

My pharmacy _____

My diabetes or kidney team _____

NHS 111 · Emergency 999

Three questions for my next review

1. Which of my medicines should I pause if I'm being sick or have diarrhoea, and which should I keep taking?
2. When and how do I restart each one, and will I need a blood test afterwards?
3. Can we write this plan down so my family can find it?

UK sources (checked 23 November 2026)

NICE NG28, 1.10.1 Sick day rules · nice.org.uk/guidance/ng28
NICE NG148, Acute kidney injury · nice.org.uk/guidance/ng148
NICE NG199, Clostridioides difficile infection · nice.org.uk/guidance/ng199
NHS, Diarrhoea and vomiting · nhs.uk/symptoms/diarrhoea-and-vomiting
NHS, Dehydration · nhs.uk/conditions/dehydration
NHS, Fainting · nhs.uk/symptoms/fainting
NHS, Diabetic ketoacidosis · nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-ketoacidosis
NHS, Who can and cannot take loperamide · nhs.uk/medicines/loperamide
NHS, Acute kidney injury · nhs.uk/conditions/acute-kidney-injury
NHS, Metformin · nhs.uk/medicines/metformin
NHS, Dapagliflozin · nhs.uk/medicines/dapagliflozin
NHS, Losartan · nhs.uk/medicines/losartan
ABCD and Renal Association sick day guidance (Diabetes UK) · diabetes.org.uk (PDF, page 87)

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Author: Dr Kennedy Umege, UK GP. MSc Diabetes (Distinction) · PgDip Diabetes · PITstop Diabetes Certification in Insulin management, DCH, DRCOG, MSc Urgent Care (Distinction) · Diploma in Urgent Medical Care, Certificate in Alcohol Misuse and Drug Abuse Management, MBBS · MRCGP · DFM.

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