

3.1.3 Diabetes

- Insulin remains stable for up to 1 month when stored at room temperature (20°C). It will deteriorate more rapidly in warmer climates.
- Insulin is absorbed more quickly in warm temperatures and more slowly in cold temperatures. Blood glucose levels should be monitored frequently and insulin dosing adjusted as needed.
- The performance of glucometers, test strips and insulin delivery devices can be affected by temperature, humidity and altitude. Urine dipstick tests may provide a more reliable method of basic monitoring whilst at altitude. Specialist advice should be received prior to travel to these environments.
- Dehydration can affect blood glucose levels and adequate hydration should be maintained.



Food- and Water-borne Risks

- Availability of suitable food and drink (including unsweetened drinks) varies.
- Simple carbohydrate sources, such as glucose tablets and sweets, should be carried to relieve symptoms of hypoglycaemia; complex carbohydrate sources, such as cereal bars and biscuits, should also be carried to supplement/replace a meal.
- Gastrointestinal illness can quickly affect blood glucose. Blood glucose levels should be monitored frequently during illness. Travellers should know how to adjust their medication, use self-treatment measures, and know when and how to seek medical assistance. See Box 2-7 in The Pre-Travel Health Consultation Section 2.



Sexual Health and Blood-borne Viral Risks (BBVs)

- Female travellers with diabetes are at increased risk of urinary tract infections.
- The risk of vaginal candidiasis is also increased, particularly if taking an antibiotic such as doxycycline for malaria prevention.
- Travellers should be advised of self-treatment options and know when to seek medical advice.



Skin Health

- Travellers with diabetes, especially those with peripheral neuropathy, should avoid injury to their feet. They should wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes and avoid walking barefoot.
- Feet should be checked regularly for injury, and kept clean, dry and moisturised.
- Toenails should be well-trimmed and broken skin covered with a sterile dressing.
- Insect bite avoidance is important; bites should be kept clean and not scratched. An antihistamine can reduce itching.