



CEREMONIAL PRACTICES

Ceremony is an essential part of traditional native healing. Physical and spiritual health are ultimately connected. For a person with diabetes, spiritual ceremonies can reduce stress in their lives and renew their determination to manage their disease. Some have found that their blood sugars return to their target range. Certain diabetes medications and insulin can cause risk for low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), and fasting can cause additional risk. Fasting is one of the many ceremonies that have been practiced in First Nation and other Indigenous Nations for many years and can be an important way to connect with self, spirituality, tribe and heritage.

RESOURCE DEVELOPED BY:

- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- James Smith Cree First Nations
- National Indigenous Diabetes Association
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte



National
Indigenous
Diabetes
Association

Association
Nationale
Autochtone
Diabète



ENGAGING IN INDIGENOUS CEREMONIAL PRACTICES WITH DIABETES

PARTNERING NATIONS FOR
THE BETTERMENT OF OUR PEOPLE

DISCLAIMER The health information is information resource only and does not replace medical advice.

ENGAGING IN INDIGENOUS CEREMONIAL PRACTICES WITH DIABETES

BEFORE THE EVENT

- ◆ Talk to elders and those who have diabetes to gather their wisdom
- ◆ Be well
- ◆ Drink plenty of water to prepare for sweating/fasting
- ◆ If your blood sugars are out of target, wait until they are in better control
- ◆ Continue to take your long acting insulin
- ◆ Let the leader know that you are living with diabetes
- ◆ Wear a medical alert bracelet/necklace so people are aware you are living with diabetes
- ◆ Make a lunch or bring healthy snacks
- ◆ Limit fried foods, sugary sweets, and processed food. Talk to a dietitian
- ◆ Bring something to treat a low sugar in case your sugars drop... 1/2 can regular pop, small juice box, 3 tsp sugar or cubes, glucose tablets

Ceremony can be safely practiced while living with diabetes.

With proper preparation and guidance from your healthcare team, individuals living with diabetes can participate fully in ceremony. This resource will guide you on how to balance ceremony and diabetes care, ensuring you can practice safely and with confidence.

DURING THE EVENT

- ◆ Don't go alone
- ◆ Drink water if it is allowed
- ◆ Be careful to not get too close to the fire/rocks with your feet as you may not feel the heat
- ◆ Do not take fast acting insulin
- ◆ Check with the leader to ask if you can leave the ceremony to check your sugar if you are not feeling well

AFTER THE EVENT

- ◆ Drink liquids
- ◆ Check your blood sugars. If they are less than 4, take a fast sugar that is equal to 3 teaspoons
- ◆ Take the fast acting insulin with your next meal
- ◆ Slowly eat the snacks/food that you brought
- ◆ Embrace the experience
- ◆ Blood sugar can continue to fall up to 24 hours after the activity

POWWOWS & DANCING

- ◆ Follow the same protocol for sweats, encouraging good hydration throughout the dance
- ◆ Rest in between dances
- ◆ Practice before the event to prevent not feeling well

FASTING

- ◆ Seek diabetes educator or HCP direction as an individualized assessment should be done by a health care provider 1-3 months prior to fast

NUTRITION TIPS

- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids: water, milk, unsweetened drinks, and herbal/traditional teas
- ◆ If possible, limit caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea, and soda
- ◆ When possible, focus on fruits and vegetable and include nutrient rich foods such as traditional, high fiber, and protein rich foods
- ◆ Encourage mindful eating (gratitude for the food and its origin, attention to natural hunger cues, attention to the look, taste, smell and feel of the food)