



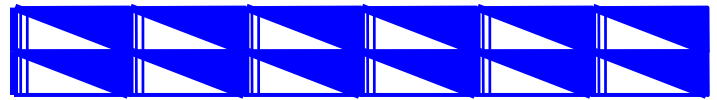
Sweat Lodge and Diabetes

You sweat a lot in a sweat lodge, and the sweat gives you a sense of special cleaning and renewal, from the inside out. The sweat lodge is used for purification by itself or as preparation for other ceremonies, for example the Sun Dance, and the Vision Quest. The sweat lodge can strengthen your spirituality. For a person with diabetes, a sweat lodge can reduce the stress in their lives and renew their determination to manage their disease. Some have found that sweats bring their blood sugars back to normal. Here are some suggestions that will help make a successful Sweat Lodge experience.

Drink enough water before a sweat; the excess sweating can dehydrate you and increase your blood sugar. If your blood sugar is above 300 (250 if ketones are present) you should get your blood sugar under better control before doing a sweat.

Sweating in sweat lodge is not the same as sweating from exercise but it can still drop your blood sugars. Check your blood sugar after a sweat if it is you first time or if you are medicating your diabetes with insulin or oral drugs that stimulate insulin production.

If you are going to a sweat before or after a Vision Quest or during a Sun Dance, drink extra liquids to avoid dehydration. Take liquids if they are offered between doors.



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Do not go into a sweat lodge alone; have someone in the sweat be aware of your diabetes. The Sweat Lodge is such an intense experience that you cannot rely on your feelings that normally indicate high or low blood sugar.

Make sure you don't burn your feet on the rocks, the hot coals or the hot spray. Sit as far away from the rocks as practical. Check the position of your legs before the door is closed and between doors. Protect your feet with a towel.

Finally, since diabetes dramatically increases the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke, make sure you know their warning signs and symptoms.

Sweat Lodges are an important way to connect with yourself, your spirituality and your tribe and heritage. Talk with others who have diabetes and have done sweats. Your health care provider can help you contact leaders who have experience accommodating people with diabetes. Do not stop going to sweat lodges just because you have diabetes; they may be just the medicine you need.

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