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# Betting on Better Outcomes: The Two-Bag Method for Diabetic Ketoacidosis in Critical Care

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Be sure to snap a pic of the code shown at the end of this session.

CE Deadline: 09/30/25





# Presenters

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*Howdy!*

# Disclosures



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# Learning Objectives



*At the end of this session, participants should be able to:*

- Recognize the pathophysiology and critical need for timely intervention in Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA).
- Recall the two-bag approach for fluid management in adult DKA.
- Identify strategies for implementing the two-bag method for fluid management in adult DKA.



The logo consists of the word "GAIT" in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed within a circular border. The logo is positioned in the upper left corner of the slide.

# PATHOPHYSIOLOGY IN DKA



# Assessment Question #1

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Which of the following best explains the primary metabolic disturbance in Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)?

- A. Hyperglycemia due to excessive carbohydrate intake
- B. Insulin deficiency leading to increased ketogenesis and acidosis
- C. Insulin resistance leading to lactic acidosis
- D. Excess insulin resulting in electrolyte shifts and hypoglycemia

Source: Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343





## What is DKA?



Life-threatening complication of diabetes



Characterized by absolute or relative insulin deficiency and excess counter-regulatory hormones



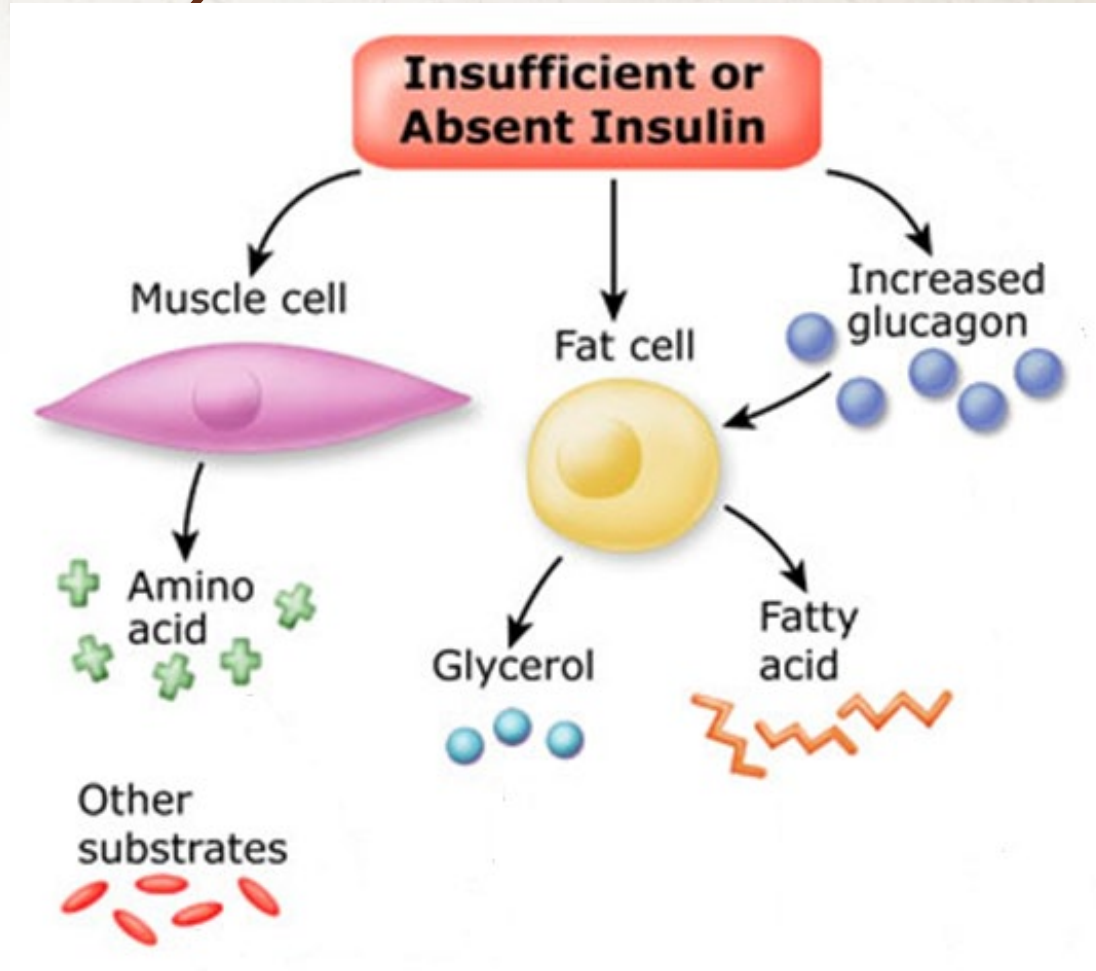
Unchecked lipolysis and ketogenesis, resulting in metabolic acidosis

Source: Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343; 2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Consensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275

# What is DKA? (continued)



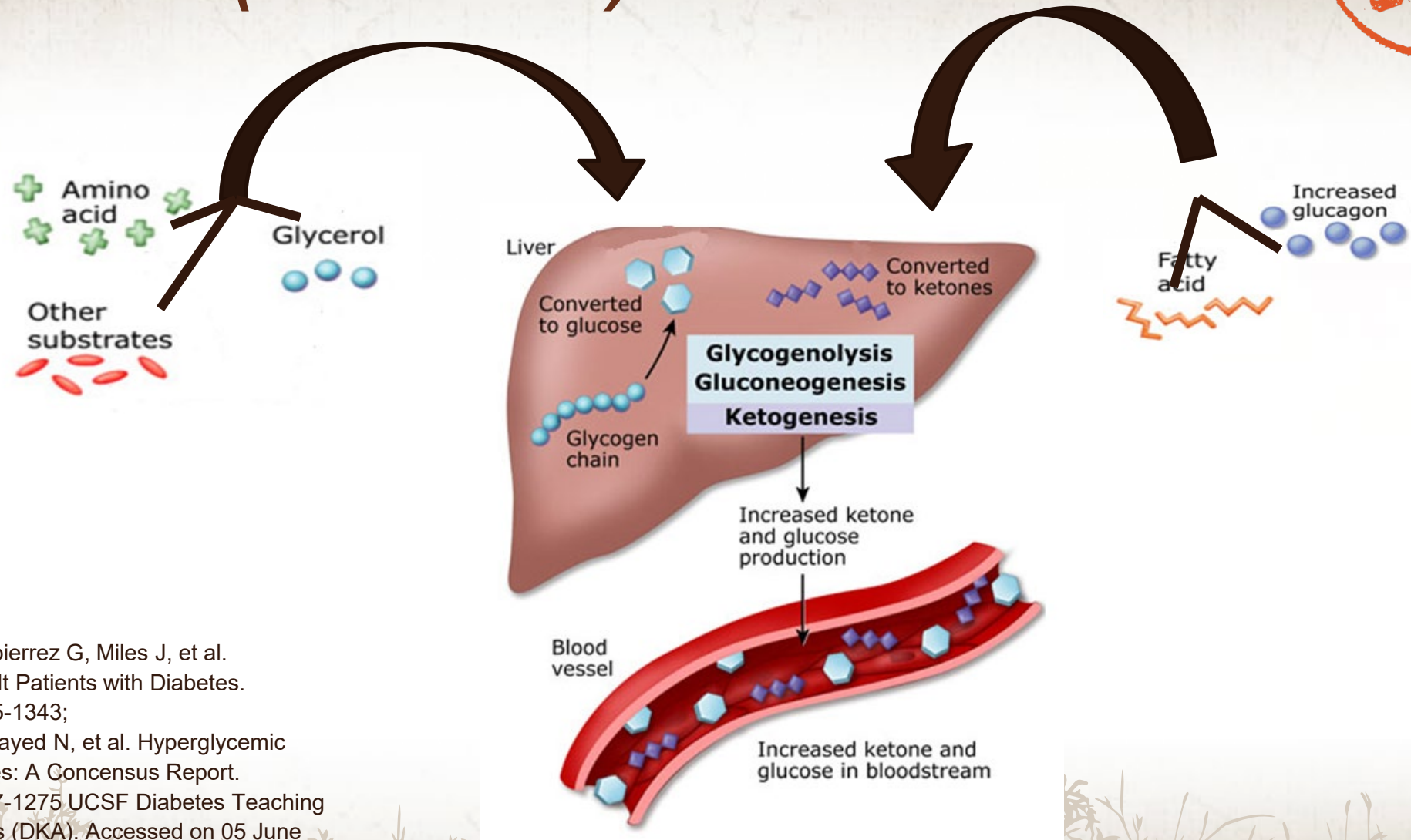
- Starvation state
- Proteolysis
- Lipolysis



Sources: 1. Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343; 2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Concensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275 3. UCSF Diabetes Teaching Center. Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA). Accessed on 05 June 2025: [Diabetic Ketoacidosis | Diabetes Teaching Center](#)



# What is DKA? (continued)



Sources: 1. Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343;  
2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Consensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275 UCSF Diabetes Teaching Center. Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA). Accessed on 05 June 2025: [Diabetic Ketoacidosis | Diabetes Teaching Center](#)

# DKA Diagnosis



DKA Diagnostic Criteria		
DKA	Diabetes/hyperglycemia	Glucose $\geq$ 200mg/dL OR prior history of diabetes
	Ketosis	Beta ( $\beta$ )-hydroxybutyrate concentration $\geq$ 3mmol/L OR urine ketone strip 2+ or greater
	Acidosis	pH $<$ 7.3 and/or bicarbonate concentration $<$ 18 mmol/L

Source: Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Concensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275.



# DKA Diagnosis



## HHS Diagnostic Criteria

S  
H  
H

**H**yperglycemia

Plasma Glucose  $\geq$  600mg/dL

**H**yperosmolarity

Calculated effective serum osmolality  $>300\text{mOsm/kg}$

Ab**S**ence of significant ketonemia

$\beta$ -hydroxybutyrate concentration  $<3\text{mmol/L}$  OR ketone urine strip  $<2+$

Absence of acidosis

pH  $\geq 7.3$  and bicarbonate  $\geq 15\text{mmol/L}$

Source: Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Concensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275.



# TREATMENT STRATEGY IN DKA





# Treatment Strategy in DKA

## Treating More Than Blood Sugar: The Case for Insulin Rethink



- Discordance of care for insulin management
- Hypoglycemia incidence
- Lack of standard in initial fluid resuscitation
- Variation in maintenance fluid management

Source: Pham T, Glem K. Adult patients diagnosed with DKA review for hypoglycemia (defined < 70), fluid resuscitation, and potassium repletion in St. Luke's Health System [Unpublished data]. Accessed via SlicerDicer in Epic. Retrieved 10/2023.

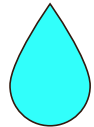
# PGY-1 Pharmacy Resident Project



## 50 Adult DKA Cases Reviewed



Hypoglycemia occurred in 12% of cases



Inconsistent fluid resuscitation



Delayed potassium repletion

Source: Pham T, Glem K. Adult patients diagnosed with DKA review for hypoglycemia (defined  $< 70$ ), fluid resuscitation, and potassium repletion in St. Luke's Health System [Unpublished data]. Accessed via SlicerDicer in Epic. Retrieved 10/2023.



# Treatment Strategy in DKA

## Reframing Insulin Strategy: Pathophysiology Over Glucose



- Weight-based insulin infusion
- Correction factor risks
- Shift focus in treatment

Hyperglycemia



Acidosis Resolution

Sources: 1. Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343; 2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Consensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275. 3. Umpierrez G, Korytkowski M. Diabetic emergencies – ketoacidosis, hyperglycaemic hyperosmolar state and hypoglycaemia. [www.nature.com/nrendo](http://www.nature.com/nrendo). Published 19 Feb 2016. Accessed 15 May 2025.



# TWO-BAG METHOD: AN OVERVIEW





# Assessment Question #2



Which is a key advantage of the two-bag method for DKA?

- A. It eliminates the need for insulin infusions
- B. It shortens ICU length of stay by 24 hours
- C. It allows individualized dextrose delivery while reducing hypoglycemia risk
- D. It avoids the use of electrolyte supplementation in fluid management

Source: Hass A, McDonnell M, Donini A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586.

# DKA Treatment Strategies

## Traditional Method



**Titrated  
Insulin  
Infusion**

0-10 units/kg/hr\*

\*Titrated based on  
institution-specific  
nomogram

**Bag #1**

½ NS / NS / LR

Fixed Rate  
Infusion



IVF  
changed  
when BG  
falls below  
250 mg/dL

**Bag #1**

D5-NS  
+/- KCl 20mEq

Fixed Rate  
Infusion

Source: Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a 'two-bag system' versus conventional treatment protocol ('one-bag system') in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7.



# DKA Treatment Strategies

## Two-bag Method



Fluid Resuscitation (20 ml/kg x 1) +/- Electrolyte correction

**Fixed  
Rate  
Insulin  
Infusion**

0.1  
units/kg/hr\*

### Bag #1

IVF Base:  
½ NS / NS /  
LR

+/- KCl 20  
mEq

Rate X

### Bag #2

D10W  
in  
½ NS or LR

Rate Y

**Combined  
X+Y rate  
remains  
consistent**



## Standard Fluid Protocol

Standard Fluid Protocol			
<div> <div>Bag #1</div> <div>Bag #2</div> </div>			
Blood Glucose (mg/dL)	Bag #1 NaCl or LR +/- 20mEq KCl	Bag #2 D10 in 0.45% NaCl or LR	Total combined infusion rate
> 250mg/dL	250 mL/hr	0 mL/hr	250 mL/hr
150-250 mg/dL	125 mL/hr	125 mL/hr	250 mL/hr
<150mg/dL	0 mL/hr	250 mL/hr	250 mL/hr

Sources: 1. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586. 2. Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a 'two-bag system' versus conventional treatment protocol ('one-bag system') in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7.



## Fluid-restricted Protocol



Blood Glucose (mg/dL)	Bag #1 0.45% or 0.9% NaCl or LR +/- 20mEq KCl	Bag #2 D10 in 0.45% NaCl or D10 in LR	Total combined infusion rate
> 250mg/dL	125 mL/hr	0 mL/hr	125 mL/hr
150-250 mg/dL	75 mL/hr	125 mL/hr	200 mL/hr
<150mg/dL	0 mL/hr	250 mL/hr	250 mL/hr

Sources: 1. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586. 2. Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a 'two-bag system' versus conventional treatment protocol ('one-bag system') in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7.



- DKA → osmotic diuresis → severe dehydration
- Average fluid deficit in DKA = 4–6 liters In DKA, hyperglycemia clears faster than acidosis.
  - Strategic management of dextrose-containing fluids = decreased risk of a hypoglycemic events

*“Loss of fluids and electrolytes are significant causes of mortality and morbidity in DKA.” – BMJ (2017)*

Source: Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a ‘two-bag system’ versus conventional treatment protocol (‘one-bag system’) in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7.





# Clinical Benefits

## Two-bag Method

↓ Decreased time to  
 $\beta$ -hydroxybutyrate  
normalization

↓ Decreased time to  
anion gap closure

↓ Decreased time to  
 $\text{HCO}_3$  correction

↓ Decreased overall  
duration of insulin  
infusion

↓ Decreased time to  
plasma glucose  
< 250 mg/dL

↓ Decreased incidence  
of hypoglycemia\*  
\*defined as a blood glucose  
<70mg/dL

Sources: 1. Gilchrist HE, Hatton CJ, Roginski MA, Esteves AM. Impact on Diabetic Ketoacidosis Resolution After Implementation of a 2-Bag Fluid Order Set. *Annals of Pharmacotherapy*. 2023;57(12):1361-1366. 2. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586. 3. Nahle J, Langford S, Albright J, Sudekum DM. Analysis of the 2-Bag Method for the Management of Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective before and after Study. *Journal of Pharmacy Practice*. 2024;38(1):21-27.



## Two-bag Method

- At SLHS, all DKA patients require ICU admission
- Nationwide, estimated mean expenses for a single hospitalization = ~\$1,300 to \$36,000
- Itemized expense calculation of DKA costs shows that a significant cost in DKA management involves the cost of the ICU stay and laboratory testing
  - Decreased duration of insulin infusion = decreased ICU length of stay + decreased laboratory testing
  - Possible treatment of DKA in non-ICU settings

Source: Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586.



## The Normal (NS) vs. Lactated Ringers (LR) Debate



- Large volume resuscitation with NS → hyperchloremia → non-anion gap metabolic acidosis
  - Possible increased risk of kidney injury
- Evolving evidence appears to favor LR > NS for IVF resuscitation
  - Treatment with LR has been associated with more rapid resolution of DKA and decreased time to discontinuation of insulin infusion
- Concerns with LR
  - Possible metabolic alkalosis, elevated serum lactate

**Bottom Line:** Use patient-specific factors to guide selection of IVF

Sources: 1. Jamison A, Mohamed A, Chedester C, Klindworth K, Hamarshi M, Sembroski E. Lactated Ringer's versus normal saline in the management of acute diabetic ketoacidosis (RINSE-DKA). *Pharmacotherapy*. 2024 Aug;44(8):623-630. 2. Self WH, Evans CS, Jenkins CA, et al. Clinical Effects of Balanced Crystalloids vs Saline in Adults With Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Subgroup Analysis of Cluster Randomized Clinical Trials. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(11). 3. Carrillo AR, Elwood K, Werth C, Mitchell J, Sarangarm P. Balanced Crystalloid Versus Normal Saline as Resuscitative Fluid in Diabetic Ketoacidosis. *Ann Pharmacother*. 2022 Sep;56(9):998-1006.



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# IMPLEMENTATION IN PRACTICE





# Assessment Question #3



Which of the following strategies was most critical in achieving successful implementation of the two-bag DKA protocol ?

- A. Standardizing insulin infusions across all care areas without modifying fluid management strategies
- B. Limiting education to ICU nurses and pharmacists only, where most DKA occurs
- C. Relying on retrospective data alone to support the practice change without engaging frontline physicians
- D. Developing standardized and fluid-restricted protocols, with early interdisciplinary education and clinical champions

Sources: 1. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586. 2. Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a 'two-bag system' versus conventional treatment protocol ('one-bag system') in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7.

# Implementation in Practice

## Where to Begin

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- Recognize a clinical concern
- Validate the concern with internal data
- Share findings broadly
- Identify and engage key stakeholders early



## Building the DKA Protocol



### Protocol

- Two-bag system
- Insulin Dosing
- Electrolyte Management

### Build

- Submission
- Validation

Sources: 1. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586. 2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Consensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275. 3. Dhatariya K. The management of diabetic ketoacidosis in adults – An updated guideline from the Joint British Diabetes Society for Inpatient Care. *Diabetic Medicine*. 2022;39:e14788, 1-20.

# Implementation in Practice

## Training & Buy-in

Educating staff

Nurses

Pharmacists

Physicians





## Challenges



- Resistance to change
- Adjustments for special populations
- Build constraints

# Implementation in Practice

## Next Steps

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- Monitor clinical outcomes
- Protocol adherence and feedback
- Ongoing education and support







# REDEFINING DKA MANAGEMENT



KEY LESSONS &  
TAKEAWAYS



## Clinical Takeaways

- Shift in mindset: Acidosis resolution over hyperglycemia alone
- Two-bag method
- Implementation through interdisciplinary team

Source: 1. Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. 2. Umpierrez G, Davis G, Elsayed N, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adults With Diabetes: A Consensus Report. *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47:1257-1275. 3. Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586 4. Munir I, Fargo R, Garrison R, et al. Comparison of a 'two-bag system' versus conventional treatment protocol ('one-bag system') in the management of diabetic ketoacidosis. *BMJ Open Diab Res Care*. 2017;5:e000395, 1-7..



# Assessment Question #1

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Which of the following best explains the primary metabolic disturbance in DKA?

- A. Hyperglycemia due to excessive carbohydrate intake
- B. Insulin deficiency leading to increased ketogenesis and acidosis
- C. Insulin resistance leading to lactic acidosis
- D. Excess insulin resulting in electrolyte shifts and hypoglycemia

Source: Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343 A

# Assessment Question #1: Correct Response



Which of the following best explains the primary metabolic disturbance in DKA?

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Source: Kitabachi A, Umpierrez G, Miles J, et al. Hyperglycemic Crises in Adult Patients with Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32:1335-1343 A



# Assessment Question #2

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Which is a key advantage of the two-bag method for DKA?

- A. It eliminates the need for insulin infusions
- B. It shortens ICU length of stay by 24 hours
- C. It allows individualized dextrose delivery while reducing hypoglycemia risk
- D. It avoids the use of electrolyte supplementation in fluid management

Source: Hass A, McDonnell M, Donini A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586.

# Assessment Question #2: Correct Response



Which is a key advantage of the two-bag method for DKA?

- A. It eliminates the need for insulin infusions
- B. It shortens ICU length of stay by 24 hours
- C. **It allows individualized dextrose delivery while reducing hypoglycemia risk**
- D. It avoids the use of electrolyte supplementation in fluid management

Source: Hass A, McDonnell M, Donihi A, Hipskind C, et al. Two-Bag System for the Management of Adult Patients with Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study. *J Emergency Medicine*. 2018; 55(5):578-586.



# Assessment Question #3



Which of the following strategies was most critical in achieving successful implementation of the two-bag DKA protocol ?

- A. Standardizing insulin infusions across all care areas without modifying fluid management strategies
- B. Limiting education to ICU nurses and pharmacists only, where most DKA occurs
- C. Relying on retrospective data alone to support the practice change without engaging frontline physicians
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# References:



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4. Pham T, Glem K. Adult patients diagnosed with DKA review for hypoglycemia (defined < 70), fluid resuscitation, and potassium repletion in St. Luke's Health System [Unpublished data]. Accessed via SlicerDicer in Epic. Retrieved 10/2023.
5. Umpierrez G, Korytkowski M. Diabetic emergencies – ketoacidosis, hyperglycaemic hyperosmolar state and hypoglycaemia. [www.nature.com/nrendo](http://www.nature.com/nrendo). Published 19 Feb 2016. Accessed 15 May 2025.



# References:



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8. Gilchrist HE, Hatton CJ, Roginski MA, Esteves AM. Impact on Diabetic Ketoacidosis Resolution After Implementation of a 2-Bag Fluid Order Set. *Annals of Pharmacotherapy*. 2023;57(12):1361-1366.
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# Thanks y'all!



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