

## A Winter Guide for Diabetics

By Mayra Rivera, FNP-BC, Diabetes Educator, Brown Medicine Division of Endocrinology

Another New England winter is upon us, bringing with it colder air temperatures, end of year holiday celebrations, and the need to spend a bit more time indoors due to weather. For persons with diabetes, this season can bring about some challenges in blood glucose level management. Take a moment to review the following information as a helpful guide to manage your own diabetes or someone you know who is living with the diagnosis.

**Holiday sweets:** It's that time of year for holiday parties and celebrations. A general rule of thumb is to eat something before you attend a party, so you're not tempted to go off your diet. Protein can help stabilize blood sugar levels and cravings, so reach for the fish, poultry or plant-based beans, nuts and seeds as opposed to carbs or sugary desserts. Keep in mind just because something is sugar-free, doesn't mean you have a green light to consume as much of it as you wish.

**Cough and flu medicines:** Diabetes raises your risk of catching a cold or flu because it weakens the immune system and releases hormones that increase blood sugar levels. Be sure to check the inactive ingredients in medications that can affect your levels. If you have other conditions such as high blood pressure, for example, decongestants found in nasal sprays and oral cold medicine can increase your pressure and must be used with caution. Check with your Brown Medicine healthcare provider before taking any medications to guide you to what is safest.

**Insulin and testing equipment:** Don't leave insulin or your testing supplies in your vehicle or durable medical equipment mail orders on your doorstep after a delivery when the weather is below freezing, as this will cause them to not work properly. Remember that insulin stored in the refrigerator can sometimes freeze as well. As a general rule of thumb, keeping your insulin, meters, strips, sensors, syringes, pumps, etc. above 40 degrees F is best.

**Cold hands and feet:** Poor circulation is one of the most common symptoms of diabetes. Frequent high blood sugar levels lead to narrowing of the arteries and reduced blood supply to tissues, and can lead to nerve damage in the feet or hands. Keep your hands and feet warm during the cold winter months by wearing gloves, moisture-wicking or compression socks, and proper footwear.

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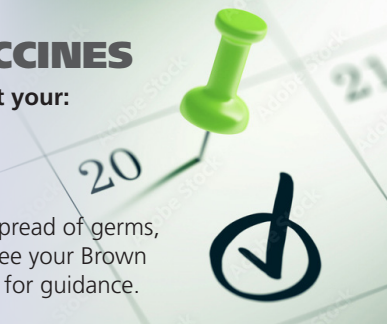
### GET YOUR VACCINES

It's that time of year to get your:

- FLU
- COVID BOOSTER
- PNEUMOCOCCAL\*

shots to protect against the spread of germs, viral infections and disease. See your Brown Medicine healthcare provider for guidance.

\*based on age



### COVID OR FLU?

Symptoms

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell & other symptoms

Peter Hollmann, MD  
Chief Medical Officer of Brown Medicine



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**Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Brown Medicine Chief Information Officer David Hemendinger** was honored with the 2022 Tech10 Lifetime Achievement Award from Rhode Island Monthly and the Tech10 Advisory Group, in recognition of his outstanding use of technology to improve the way Southern New Englanders live and work.

For the last 25 years, David has devoted his professional IT career to the strategy, vision and deployment of technology solutions to improve healthcare delivery for patients, providers and supporting clinical staff. Notable accomplishments include enabling emergency communication services and TeleVisit capabilities to hundreds of Brown Medicine physicians within 24 hours to support remote patient care during the pandemic.

*Congratulations, David!*



**Employee of the Quarter**

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022

Congratulations to Adam Imbruglio, senior systems administrator at Brown Medicine, for being named the July-September 2022 Employee of the Quarter. Way to go!

Thank you for your hard work and ongoing dedication to Brown Medicine.

**Adam Imbruglio**  
Senior Systems Administrator (IT)

**PBN Health Care Summit 2022**

Dr. Peter Hollmann, chief medical officer of Brown Medicine, was a featured panelist at Providence Business News' Fall Health Care Summit held at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick, R.I. He joined other industry sector professionals in a discussion about COVID-19 vaccine rates and accessibility, the role employers play in the health care system, and the prevalence of long COVID illness. In particular, Dr. Hollmann stated he was impressed with the scientific response to the epidemic in creating vaccines.



**In-House Job Fair**

Brown Medicine's next job fair will be held on January 19, 2023 at the Patient Center located at 375 Wampanoag Trail, East Providence R.I. from 4:00pm -6:00pm. Please visit our careers page for all available positions: <https://brownmed.org/careers/>

**Halloween Contest Winners**

Once again, the Endocrinology team at Brown Medicine won the top prize at our annual Halloween Contest. Their "outer space" theme put them over the top. Honorary Mentions go to Pulmonary Division staffers for their Grease theme, and our Compliance team's masquerade ball. Thanks to all Brown Medicine teams who competed and showcased their Halloween spirit and creativity with patients and colleagues alike.



**Winner: Endocrine - Outer Space**



**Honorable Mention: Pulmonary - Grease**



**Honorable Mention: Compliance- Masquerade Ball**

**RECIPE**

Let's face it, the holidays are not only the most wonderful time of the year, but also the busiest! Let the slow cooker do the work while you get your holiday gift wrapping finished.

This White Chicken Chili is cozy, easy and complete. A perfect meal for cold winter nights.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 1/2 c. low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (15.5-oz.) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 1/2 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 2 (4-oz.) cans green chiles
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded & minced, plus more for serving
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 c. frozen corn

**FOR SERVING**

- Sour cream
- Sliced avocado
- Thinly sliced jalapeño
- Freshly chopped cilantro
- Lime wedges

**DIRECTIONS**

Add broth, beans, chicken, green chiles, onion, garlic, jalapeño, oregano, and cumin to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with salt and pepper and cook on high for 2 to 3 hours, until chicken is tender. Remove chicken from chili and shred. Use a potato masher to gently mash about 1/3 of the beans before returning chicken to slow cooker. Stir in shredded chicken and corn and cover and season with more salt and pepper if needed. Leave slow cooker on warm until ready to serve. To serve, top with sour cream, avocado, jalapeño, cilantro, and a squeeze of lime juice.

Source: [delish.com](https://delish.com)



## Employee Spotlight: Meet Brad Crough

**Brown Medicine Insider:** *Thank you for your service in the Army. Tell us about your background as a war veteran.*

**Crough:** After graduation from Bryant University in 1998, I was commissioned in the U.S. Army as an officer through ROTC and stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas working in Patriot missile defense. I did four years of active duty all over the world, then came back to the RI National Guard. That's when Operation Iraqi Freedom started (2003-04) and I was assigned to an aviation unit as a finance officer. In the war, my job role involved recovering classified damaged components on aircraft. We recovered 18 crash-damaged helicopters to fix or send back to Texas. Essentially, the aircraft went down and we had to go get them. As a captain, I was awarded the Bronze Star for Action in Combat. I resigned my commission in 2008 after all of my Army obligations were done.

**BMI:** *How did you end up working at Brown Medicine?*

**Crough:** My real job was as financial analyst for Blue Cross Blue Shield RI. There, I met some of the Brown Medicine physicians and senior leaders who hired me to do some contract work. In 2011, I joined Brown Medicine full time (it was then University Medicine).

**BMI:** *What do you like best about working here?*

**Crough:** I was looking for a place where I still felt valued. All veterans look for that. We come with a core set of ethos and values. I found that here. It's a family environment; a place where you can be you, and others support you in your endeavors.

I actually left in 2016 for a short while and took consulting jobs to support my young family, but immediately came back because the grass is not greener. Not every organization has the same values, inclusivity and diversity as we have here. This is a unique place where I can be myself and pursue my passions openly and freely, and leadership embraces that. It's never a job if it's your passion.



Pictured here is Crough in the U.S. Army and receiving his Bronze Star medal for Action in Combat.



**BMI:** *Bryant University just announced a new major - healthcare analytics - which will be the first of its kind in the state. Tell us about this initiative that will provide data analytics students with background training in healthcare.*

**Crough:** I'm looking to start an internship coop for my department to keep talent raw. Part of my strategic planning is to always have a continuous flow of new, young talent coming through. Partnering with this Bryant program allows me to utilize the skills of the graduates who can hit the ground running fast. Bryant is giving them knowledge of the newest tools; they're not using some technology from 1975 to teach their students. We can give them experience while adding value to our mission. Also, I just heard that Bryant is also offering a master's program in informatics, which is not analytics but it's in the same ballpark. I'm a huge supporter of any institution that recognizes these fields as a degree.

**BMI:** *Will you be hiring any data analytics students from this program?*

**Crough:** Right now, we don't have any open jobs but you never know what can happen if we can find a rough diamond in the patch. I'm always on the lookout for talent.

**BMI:** *Why is it important for a data analytics staffer to have a healthcare background?*

**Crough:** There's two types of job candidates: those that are experienced with the tools, technology and ability to analyze data; and those that are more clinically adjusted, know the business, but not how to get the data and curate it into something visual that can be used for analysis. You have to know both. If you're measuring blood pressure, for example, you need to know what's a good and bad pressure and why you're measuring it. In our field, does the data have to do with quality or revenue or some other purpose? You need to know the full monty.



**Brad Crough**  
Director of Analytics  
Brown Medicine

There's common medical terminology, common measurements, and a lot of industry standard things we do in analytics that generally has to be taught to someone just out of the gate. When a candidate comes to me with this broader industry knowledge, I don't have to teach it and we can focus on moving forward with the work at hand. The more complex understanding of our healthcare business comes with time.

**BMI:** *Did the pandemic have any impact in your work?*

**Crough:** This field has always been here, however, the pandemic has shown a spotlight on some of the things our department can do to help assist with the patient continuum of care through data. Leveraging technology enabled us to do it faster and easier. With the CARES Act coming on board, it's about to get even faster and easier. There's always new technology, new securities, and the need to be always 'on' - as healthcare happens 24/7. Industry tools and tech that were implemented enabled us to curate data faster and show it more visually for the average end user physician, researcher or administrative person. We are currently embedding these in our post-pandemic way of doing things. We are continuously taking very complex things and simplifying through data visualizations to find that proverbial "ah ha" needle in the haystack. The ability to do that as fast as we need helps if we get a well-trained data intern coming out of school with a good solid base of knowledge already.

**BMI:** *How did your background help you in your job today?*

**Crough:** I started literally in rocket science making warheads hit warheads with Patriot missile systems. I sat in the desert for years and learned I had a passion to code. From there, the military taught me it's about people and moving people to get things done. Moving crash-damaged aircraft from a warzone in Iraq to Texas involves a lot of people and moving people.

**BMI:** *How does your work affect patients?*

**Crough:** Patients should be comforted, knowing their data is protected and secured and not being used for anything they don't agree to. If you're being seen by a Brown Medicine provider, you're being followed and cared for by the smartest people on this planet. They use and publish research that benefits everybody. Brown Medicine providers are data-driven, have the most up-to-date data to make decisions, and publish their work for others across the world to follow. Research data is so important, from simple lists to complex algorithms that can predict disease. There's always research happening on a perpetual basis. It's where new ideas and new medicine is discovered. If you're not being seen by a Brown Medicine provider, then you should be!

**BMI:** *Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your data analytics work?*

**Crough:** I just want to say that our IT Department is what I call our "secret sauce." Without them, we're dead in the water. You can quote me on that!

Improving circulation in these extremities can be aided by cardio exercise to get the blood moving, provided that your physician approves.

**Warm hands before testing:** Testing via finger prick for blood sugar levels when your hands are cold can be painful. Warm them up by sitting on your fingers briefly, rubbing them for friction, or placing them under warm water to get the blood flowing.

**Don't skip workouts:** Staying active in winter is important, but take steps to exercise safely whether outdoors or in. Bundle up in layers of clothing and always wear a hat for warmth. In extreme cold or wind chills, opt for indoor activities such as yoga, treadmill walking, or strength training with weights. Exercise lowers blood sugar and has other health benefits such as fitness, weight loss, better sleep and increased energy.

**Stay hydrated:** Drinking water helps rid the body of excess glucose through urine output. Hydrate before you feel thirsty. Dehydration can happen even in cold months; hydrate before you feel thirsty. When you don't drink enough water, the glucose becomes more concentrated and can cause your kidneys to work overtime producing urine. It is advised to take in/drink a minimum of 8 glasses of water (approximately one-half gallon) per day.



## Cold Weather Health Tips

### FOR CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE

Sudden changes in the weather such as a cold front that accompanies a winter storm can make chronic lung disease symptoms worse. Cold, dry air can irritate airways and cause coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

Here are some tips to keep your lungs healthy during the upcoming winter months:

**Limit your exposure to cold and wind.** It sounds simple, but cover your nose and mouth with a scarf and breathe through your nose. Don't try to exercise outside in severe cold weather and, if you shovel snow, don't overexert yourself or try to do it all at once.

**Power outages can happen during ice, wind and snow storms and cold snaps.** If you use critical medical equipment that needs power such as home oxygen, a CPAP machine, ventilator, or nebulizer, it's important to have a plan to keep your device working. Be sure to have an alternate power source in place. Check to make sure the backup power source will work for your device, and let your power company and emergency responders in your neighborhood know you are using a medical device that needs power.

**Stock up on food, water and any medications and medication refills in case you are having to hunker down for the duration of a winter storm and beyond.** Prepare your home by winterizing around windows and doors to preserve heat; check or service your heating system to ensure adequate ventilation; and clean fireplaces and chimneys to ensure proper ventilation when used and avoid carbon monoxide accumulation from fumes inside the house.

In the event that you have to leave home due to a power outage or storm, create a travel pack to ensure you have everything you need in one place. For example, this can include:

- Copies of your personal Asthma or COPD Action Plan\*
- An extra written prescription in case medication is lost or destroyed
- Insurance card & Brown Medicine healthcare provider contact info
- Quick-relief and controller medications
- A valved holding chamber or spacer for your inhaler
- Allergy medication

\*This is an individualized sheet that details the steps to take to keep your asthma or COPD from getting worse. It also provides guidance on when to call your Brown Medicine healthcare provider or when to go to the emergency room. It's an important tool to share with caregivers of children with asthma, with members of your family or close friends who check in on you, or when talking with your doctor to make a plan that's best for you.

Source: Dr. Hina Khan, Brown Medicine Division of Hematology/Oncology; American Lung Association



*Holiday Greetings*

**Wishing you health, peace and joy this holiday season.**  
~From your friends at **Brown Medicine**

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**BROWN MEDICINE**  
BROWN PHYSICIANS, INC.

110 Elm Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
1-877-771-7401  
[BrownMed.org](http://BrownMed.org)

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