

LOW BLOOD SUGAR (HYPOGLYCEMIA)

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Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

People who have diabetes and use insulin or diabetes pills can have low blood sugar (glucose). Low blood sugar, called hypoglycemia, happens when the level of sugar in the blood falls below 70 mg/dl. Blood sugar drops when there is more insulin than needed to regulate the sugar level.

Causes of hypoglycemia

- Eating meals late or skipping meals
- Not eating the whole meal or enough carbohydrates
- Being more active than usual
- Taking more medicine than needed
- Drinking alcohol without eating
- Any combination of the above

Symptoms of hypoglycemia

- Weakness or shaking
- Moist skin, sweating
- Fast heartbeat
- Dizziness
- Sudden hunger

- Confusion
- Pale skin
- Numbness in mouth or tongue
- Irritability, nervousness
- Unsteadiness
- Nightmares, bad dreams, restless sleep

You might pass out if your hypoglycemia is not treated.

Treatment for hypoglycemia

- Test your blood sugar level, if possible. If you think your blood sugar is low but are unable to test your blood, treat with one of the following:
 1. ½ cup fruit juice
 2. 3 glucose tablets
 3. 5 solid candies
 4. ½ cup non-diet soda
 5. 1 tube instant glucose gel
 6. 3 peppermint candies
- Wait 15 minutes. If your symptoms do not lessen, retest if possible. If your blood sugar is less than 70 mg/L (3.9 mmol/dl), repeat treatment.
- If your next meal is more than ½ hour away, follow up with a small snack such as one of the following:
 1. ½ sandwich
 2. 28 grams (1oz) cheese with four to six crackers
 3. 1 tbsp. peanut butter with four to six crackers
- If you still do not feel better, call your doctor or 999.
- Record this episode. Write down the date and time your low blood sugar occurred, any possible causes, and what you did to treat it.

Safety tips

- Have both a sugar, such as hard candy, and a starch, such as peanut butter or cheese crackers, with you at all times.
- Treat the symptoms early.
- Always carry a diabetes ID in your purse or wallet.
- Be sure your family, friends, and co-workers know what they can do to help you.
- Check your blood sugar level before, during, and after exercise/increased activity.

- Talk to your doctor if you have more than one episode of low blood sugar.
- Learn about diabetes. Talk to your doctor and diabetes educator, and arrange a personal treatment plan.

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