

Hypoglycemia

Managing Low Blood Sugar

Hypoglycemia is a condition in which the amount of sugar in the blood is too low. It is defined as when blood sugar level less than 70 mg/dL. The body needs some sugar in the bloodstream to support your normal brain function. If sugar levels is too low, it can be life-threatening.

Causes

There are many reasons low blood sugar can occur, including:

- Diabetes medicines, such as insulin and sulfonylureas can cause extended low blood sugar. If you take these medicines, you need to continue monitoring closely for hypoglycemia.
- Skipping or delaying meals while you are taking diabetes medicines.
- Drinking alcohol
- Interactions of diabetes medicines with other medicines

Symptoms of Hypoglycemia

Low blood sugar may happen very quickly. It is important for you and anyone close to you to recognize the warning signs of hypoglycemia. You can then act quickly to treat it. Symptoms include:

- Shaking
- Blurred vision
- Fast heartbeat
- Tingling around the mouth or lips
- Cold, pale, moist skin
- Being unresponsive
- Slurring words or garbled speech
- Irritability, or sudden changes in personality
- Drowsiness
- Fatigue
- Confusion
- Hunger
- Sweating

Actions to Treat Low Blood Sugar

- Test your blood sugar **right away** when you have symptoms of hypoglycemia. Always carry your glucose meter and testing supplies with you when you go out. Bring glucose tablets or a fast-acting sugar source with you when you leave your house.

- If your blood sugar is less than 70 mg/dL, treat with 15 to 20 grams of simple carbohydrates (fast-acting sugar). See the **Food and Drinks to Treat Low Blood Sugar** list.
- Wait 15 minutes and test your blood sugar again. The rule of 15 refers to taking 15 grams of carbohydrates, then waiting 15 minutes to check your blood sugar again.
- If your blood sugar is still less than 70 mg/dL, **repeat step 2**.
- Once your blood sugar is 70 mg/dl or higher, eat a snack or meal containing protein to help keep your blood sugar level above 70 mg/dL. The protein helps to keep the blood sugar level stable.
- If your blood sugar is still low, less than 70 mg/dL, go to the nearest hospital emergency center. **Call 911** if you are unable to drive yourself.
- If you have hypoglycemia 1 or more times a week, contact your prescribing doctor as you may need to change your diabetes medicine. **Call 911** if you cannot reach your doctor.

These are general guidelines. Ask your care team if they apply to you.

Food and Drinks to Treat Low Blood Sugar

Each item listed is an example of 15 grams of fast acting carbohydrates.

- ½ cup regular carbonated soda (not diet)
- ½ cup fruit juice (orange or apple juice)
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 8 Lifesavers® candies or 10 jellybeans
- 3 to 4 glucose tablets

Preventing Low Blood Sugar

- Eat meals and snacks as instructed. **Do not** skip or delay meals.
- Check blood sugar as instructed.
- Take insulin as directed.
- Always carry some form of fast-acting sugar.
- Monitor your blood sugar during and after exercise, especially activities that are more vigorous and more prolonged than usual for you.
- Carry a snack containing protein with you in case you have a delayed meal or need to eat after a treatment of low blood sugar.