

## Diabetes: Low Blood Sugar



Hypoglycemia means that your blood sugar is low and your body (especially your brain) is not getting enough fuel. Your blood sugar can go too low if you take too much insulin, miss a meal, or take too many diabetes pills. A snack or drink with sugar in it will raise your blood sugar and should ease your symptoms right away.

### What are the symptoms of low blood sugar?

Watch for these early signs of low blood sugar:

- You have nausea.
- You are hungry.
- You feel nervous, cranky, or shaky.
- You have cold, clammy, wet skin.
- You sweat when you are not exercising.
- You have a fast heartbeat.
- You feel confused.
- You feel anxious.

If your blood sugar drops while you are sleeping, your partner or other family members may notice that you are sweating and behaving

differently. Signs of low blood sugar at night include:

- Restlessness.
- Making unusual noises.
- Trying to get out of bed or accidentally rolling out of bed.
- Sleepwalking.
- Nightmares.
- Sweating.

You may wake up with a headache in the morning if your blood sugar was low during the night.

### How do you prevent low blood sugar?

- The most important way to prevent low blood sugar is to test your blood sugar level often each day and to follow your doctor's instructions. It is especially important to check at times when your blood sugar has been low in the past.
- Eat small meals more often so that you do not get too hungry between meals. Do not skip meals.
- Balance extra exercise with eating more. Not everyone will have low blood sugar right after exercise. Check your blood sugar and learn how it changes after exercise. If your blood sugar stays at a normal level, you may not need to eat after exercising.
- Keep a diary of how often you have low blood sugar, including when you last ate and what you ate. This will help you learn what causes your blood sugar to drop.
- Make sure your family, friends, and coworkers know the symptoms of low blood sugar and know what to do to get your sugar level up.

- Wear a medical alert bracelet that lets people know you have diabetes.
- If you lose weight or develop kidney problems, ask your doctor if there should be a change in your medicines. Weight loss or kidney problems may affect how your body deals with medicine, and too much medicine may cause your blood sugar to drop too low.

## How do you treat low blood sugar?

If you feel an episode of low blood sugar coming on, eat 15 grams of carbohydrate. Wait 15 minutes, and check your blood sugar.

Foods that have 15 grams of carbohydrate include the following:

- 3 to 4 glucose tablets
- 3 hard candies
- ½ cup to ¾ cup (4 to 6 ounces) of fruit juice or regular (nondiet) soda

- 1 tablespoon of sugar or 1 cup of fat-free milk

If your blood sugar is still low after you have eaten the carbohydrate (sugar) snack, repeat these steps again. Eat something that has sugar in it. Wait another 15 minutes, and check your blood sugar again. If it has come back into your target blood sugar range, eat your normal meals and snacks as planned. If your blood sugar is still low, call your doctor right away.

You can ask to have glucagon medicine on hand for blood sugar emergencies. Glucagon is a hormone that raises blood sugar levels quickly. If you have problems with severe low blood sugar, talk with your doctor about having a family member or someone who is often with you learn how to give this shot if needed. The shot should be given only in emergencies.

## When should you call the doctor?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. Make sure friends and loved ones know these signs as well. For example, call if:

- You have a seizure.
- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have symptoms of low blood sugar that do not get better after you eat or drink something with sugar in it.
- You have just gotten a shot of glucagon.

**Call your doctor right away** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your vision gets blurry, you feel dizzy, or you get a headache.
- You feel weak or drowsy.
- You have trouble standing, walking, or talking.
- You feel confused or have trouble thinking.