

# Hypoglycemia

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Low blood glucose (sugar) is known by several names: hypoglycemia, insulin reaction, or insulin shock. Hypoglycemia has many causes (see table below). It can occur quickly, especially if you are taking insulin.

## GUIDELINES

It is important to learn how your body feels with low blood sugar so that you can take action right away.

## Special Note

Once the symptoms are gone, if you must wait more than 30 minutes until your next meal; eat a snack (half a sandwich, cheese and crackers, or a

banana and half a cup of skim milk). Any food used to treat reactions is in addition to your regular meal plan; do not subtract this food from your next meal.

*IF THE SYMPTOMS ARE NOT GONE WITHIN 30 MINUTES, CALL A FRIEND OR THE EMERGENCY NUMBER FOR HELP.*

## PREVENTION

Follow your doctor's or nurse's instructions:

1. Eat your snack before vigorous exercise.
2. Be alert for low blood sugar signs before meals, during and after exercise, and during your medication's peak action (especially with insulin).
3. Stay on your diabetic plan for food, medication, and exercise.
  - a. Be alert for changes in your daily routine that can affect your blood sugar levels.

	Very Low (under 40 mg/dl) Severe Reaction	Low (40–65 mg/dl) Mild Reaction
<b>WHAT IT FEELS LIKE (SYMPTOMS)</b>	Confusion Personality changes, acting differently than usual Poor coordination, clumsiness Slurred speech Twitching muscles Pounding heart Increased weakness Convulsions Drowsiness, loss of consciousness	Shakiness and nervousness Sweaty, cold and clammy skin Sudden hunger Rapid heart rate Feel weak or lightheaded Blurred or double vision Headache Tingling or numb lips or tongue Nausea Nightmares or crying out during sleep
<b>WHAT CAUSES IT</b>	Ignored or not properly treated mild hypoglycemia	Too much insulin or too many diabetes pills Too little food, the wrong type of food, late or missed meals Too much exercise without eating enough A combination of the above Vomiting your last meal Use of medicines that can lower blood sugar levels Alcoholic beverages (especially on an empty stomach)
<b>WHAT TO DO (TREATMENT)</b>	Eat one of the simple sugars listed for mild reaction but use up to twice the amount indicated <i>If you become unconscious, your family or friends should: call the emergency number, rub a thick form of sugar on the inside of your cheek or under your tongue (Monogel, Cake-Mate, or Instagluco), turn your face toward the floor with it resting on your arms, inject glucagon</i>	Eat one of the following: simple sugars (15 grams of carbohydrate will relieve most symptoms): 6 lifesavers, jelly beans, or sugar cubes; 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of orange or grapefruit juice; 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of regular soft drink (not diet); 2–3 glucose tablets; 2 tablespoons (1 small box) of raisins Repeat one of the above if you still have symptoms after 10–15 minutes

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- b. Do not skip or delay meals.
4. Before taking any other medications, even non-prescription ones, check with your doctor or nurse.
5. Always carry medical identification and some form of simple sugar with you. Take the simple sugar as soon as symptoms are felt.
6. Show family members and friends where you keep your emergency glucagon kit and how to give glucagon.
7. When you have a low blood sugar reaction, write down the date and time of day as well as your diet, exercise, and medication. Call your nurse or doctor with this information if
  - a. The symptoms stay the same or become worse after treatments,
  - b. You have repeated hypoglycemic reactions,
  - c. You have any reactions while you are taking pills for diabetes control.
8. Follow your plan for monitoring your blood sugar level or testing your urine.
9. Only blood sugar testing can show low sugar levels. Ask your doctor or nurse before using alcoholic beverages. Alcoholic beverages would need to be made part of your diet plan.

### Special Note

After having hypoglycemia, the body sometimes tries to compensate by releasing a hormone that increases the blood sugar level. This is called rebounding (Somogyi effect). You may find your next few blood sugar readings may be high after you have had hypoglycemia. The sugar levels usually return to normal within 24 hours. If you have questions, call your doctor or nurse before adjusting your insulin levels.

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## OTHER INSTRUCTIONS