

Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)

Too little glucose (sugar) in your blood is called **hypoglycemia** or **low blood sugar**. Diabetes itself doesn't cause low blood sugar. But some of the treatments for diabetes, such as pills or insulin, may increase your risk for it. Low blood sugar may cause you to lose consciousness or have a seizure. So always treat low blood sugar right away, but don't overeat.

Special note: Always carry a source of fast-acting sugar and a snack in case of hypoglycemia.

What you may notice

If you have low blood sugar, you may have 1 or more of these symptoms:

- Shakiness or dizziness
- Cold, clammy skin or sweating
- Feelings of hunger
- Headache
- Nervousness
- A hard, fast heartbeat
- Weakness
- Confusion or irritability
- Blurred vision

What you should do

- First, check your blood sugar. If it is too low (out of your target range), eat or drink 15 to 20 grams of fast-acting sugar. This may be 3 to 4 glucose tablets, 4 oz (half a cup) fruit juice or regular (nondiet) soda, 8 oz (one cup) fat-free milk, or 1 tablespoon of honey. Don't take more than this, or your blood sugar may go too high.
- Wait 15 minutes. Then recheck your blood sugar if you can.
- If your blood sugar is still too low, repeat the steps above and check your blood sugar again. If your blood sugar still has not returned to your target range,



contact your health care provider or seek emergency care.

- Once your blood sugar returns to target range, eat a snack or meal.

Preventing low blood sugar

- If your condition needs a rigid treatment plan, eat your meals and snacks at the same times each day. Don't skip meals!
- If your treatment plan allows you to change when you eat and what you eat, learn how to change the time and dose of your rapid-acting insulin to match this.
- Ask your health care provider if it is safe for you to drink alcohol. Never drink on an empty stomach.
- Take your medication at the prescribed times.
- Always carry a source of fast-acting sugar and a snack when you're away from home.

Other things to do

- Carry a medical ID card or wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace. It should say that you have diabetes. It should also say what to do if you pass out or have a seizure.
- Make sure your family, friends, and coworkers know the signs of low blood sugar. Tell them what to do if your blood sugar falls very low and you can't treat yourself.
- Keep a **glucagon emergency kit** handy. Be sure your family, friends, and coworkers know how and when to use it. Check it regularly and replace the glucagon before it expires.
- Talk to your health care team about other things you can do to prevent low blood sugar.

If you experience unexplained hypoglycemia or hypoglycemia several times, call your health care provider.

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