

## High and Low Blood Glucose (Sugar) Reactions

### Low Blood Glucose (Hypoglycemia)

Less than \_\_\_\_\_ mg/dL

#### Causes

- Too much insulin or diabetes pills
- Late/skipped meal or smaller than usual meal
- More activity/exercise than usual
- Alcohol intake without food

#### Symptoms (happen quickly)

- Shaky, sweaty or clammy
- Light-headed, weak, blurry vision
- Hungry, irritable, anxious or confused

These are the most common symptoms. Get to know your symptoms and act quickly. If not treated quickly, you may lose consciousness.

#### Treatment Options

Get treatment quickly. Take 15 grams of quick-acting carbohydrate (sugar) if able to swallow safely. Examples:

- 4 oz. (½ cup) juice or regular (non-diet) soda
- Glucose liquid or gel (read label for amount)
- 4 glucose tablets (chew them)
- Soft, chewable candy (amount varies)

Check your blood glucose 15 minutes after treatment. If your glucose is still below 70 mg/dL, repeat treatment.

Glucagon is an option if you cannot swallow safely. Someone else would need to give this to you.

**Call 911** if you get more sleepy and less alert or if the glucose levels stay below 70 mg/dL after treatment.

### High Blood Glucose (Hyperglycemia)

More than \_\_\_\_\_ mg/dL

#### Causes

- Not enough or missed dose of insulin or diabetes pills
- Less activity than usual
- Overeating
- Illness (cold, flu, infection)
- Pain or injury
- Stress (physical or emotional)
- Some medicines (such as steroids)

#### Symptoms (happen over time)

- Thirst, frequent urination
- Nausea/vomiting
- Unexplained weight loss
- Slow healing or frequent infections
- Fatigue or sleepy
- Blurred vision

These are the most common symptoms. Many people do not have symptoms until glucose levels are very high, but this varies for each person. If not treated, high blood sugars can be life-threatening.

#### Treatment Options

Insulin is often used to treat high blood glucose levels. If you do not use insulin, talk with your health care team about what to do. It is not always best to exercise or to eat less to lower your glucose levels. Discuss this with your health care team. If you are sick, follow sick day guidelines.

## **Ways to Prevent Hypoglycemia and Hyperglycemia**

- Know what causes your low and high blood glucose levels and take steps to prevent those causes.
- Test your glucose levels as advised by your health care team. Know your target glucose levels.
- Keep a log of your results. If you notice patterns of high or low glucose levels, call your doctor or nurse to discuss these trends.
- Take your insulin or diabetes pills as prescribed. If you think the doses are a cause of your low or high blood glucose levels, talk with your health care team about making changes.
- Learn how your medicines work and when they will affect your blood glucose levels most.
- Follow your meal plan. Do not skip meals and avoid overeating.
- Check your blood sugar before exercise and before driving. Eat a snack if needed.
- Always carry fast-acting carbohydrates with you to treat low blood sugar quickly.

## **Informing Others**

It is important to wear a Medical Alert bracelet or necklace that is easy to see by others. Carry a wallet card that states that you have diabetes. It should include your current list of medicines.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4346