

Recognizing and Treating Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

What is Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)?

Low blood sugar or hypoglycemia occurs when **blood glucose levels fall below 70 mg/dL** in a person with diabetes.

Common causes include: Too much insulin, the wrong kind or dose of diabetes medication, exercising or getting more than usual activity, too little food, illness, and drinking alcohol without eating.

Signs of Low Blood Sugar

When blood sugar is too low, you may experience one or more of the following symptoms:



Sweating



Pallor



Irritability or Anxiety



Hunger



Dizziness



Sleepiness

Other symptoms may include shaking, a fast heartbeat, headache, blurred vision, confusion, seizures or loss of consciousness.

Check your blood sugar if you have any of these symptoms.

Everyone has a slightly different reaction to hypoglycemia. You may have these feelings even if your blood sugar is not less than 70 mg/dL if your blood sugar has been high for a long time. **Checking your blood sugar is the only way to be sure that you are experiencing hypoglycemia.**

If experiencing low blood sugar symptoms or an alarm/alert on your CGM, verify with a glucometer.

How Do I Treat Low Blood Sugar?

Consuming sugar as quickly as possible to bring your blood sugar back up.

The **Rule of 15** is a simple way to remember how to treat low blood sugar!

- 1 **Check blood sugar** with a glucometer to confirm it is less than 70 mg/dL.
- 2 **Eat 15 grams** of fast-acting carbohydrates (see options on next page).
- 3 **Wait 15 minutes** and check blood sugar again.
- 4 **If still below 70 mg/dL** repeat steps 2 and 3.

Remember! Liquids work faster than solid food, and foods with fat and/or protein are even slower at bringing up blood glucose.

Fast-Acting Carbohydrate (carb) Options

Option	Amount (15g carbs)
Glucose tablets / packet	3 to 4 tablets / 1 packet
Regular pop/soda	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Juice (orange, apple, grape, cranberry)	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Hard candy	4 to 10 pieces
Sugar packets	1 packet
Fruit snacks	1 small package



Always keep fast-acting carbs on hand!

Hypoglycemia can be life-threatening and needs to be treated immediately.

What if I am unable to safely chew or swallow?

If you are awake and able to chew and swallow safely, eating a fast-acting carb is always preferred.

For severe cases: If you are unconscious or confused in a way that affects your ability to chew and swallow without choking, there is an injection or nasal spray called glucagon that family, friends, or coworkers can administer. Ask your care team if a prescription for glucagon is right for you.

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Staying Safe

Here are some ways to stay safe and prepared in case you start to experience low blood sugar.

Ask for a Glucagon Prescription

If you are on medications that can lead to low blood sugar, such as insulin, it is important to have glucagon in case of emergencies.



Wear Diabetes Identification

Wearing identification that says you have diabetes ensures you get the help you need when you are away from home.



Never Drive with Low Blood Sugar

Your ability to drive safely can be impaired, similar to alcohol. Pull over, treat, and wait until your blood sugar improves and symptoms resolve before driving again.



Develop an Action Plan

Talk to your family and friends about the symptoms of low blood sugar and develop an action plan in case you start experiencing hypoglycemia.



What Should I Do After a Low Blood Sugar Episode?

Reflect & Record

Think about what may have caused the low blood sugar (medications, not eating, physical activity) and make note of this.

Call the Office If:

- Hypoglycemia occurs **more than 2 times in a week.**
- You needed someone to help you get sugar.
- You required glucagon.

Your medications may need adjustment.

