



## Low Blood Sugar

Although people usually think about the long-term complications when it comes to diabetes, short-term or acute problems can also occur. Both low blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia) and high blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia) are acute problems.

## What is a low blood sugar?

Usually, a blood sugar level of less than 70 mg/dL is considered too low and needs to be treated. Low blood sugar is also called hypoglycemia.

Anything that lowers your blood sugar can cause hypoglycemia. Too much insulin, the wrong kind or dose of your diabetes pills, too much exercise, or too little food can cause your blood sugar to go too low.

## How will I feel when my blood sugar is too low?

When the blood sugar is too low, you will feel certain symptoms. This is called a reaction. You might feel:

- sweaty
- a fast heartbeat
- nervous
- anxious
- irritated
- weak
- headache
- hungry
- confused
- numb around your nose or mouth

Sometimes other people notice you are having a reaction before you do. They might notice you are:

- irritable
- not thinking clearly
- confused
- slurring your words
- acting groggy or sleepy
- not sleeping well or having nightmares

## **Will I have all of these signs and symptoms?**

Everyone has slightly different signs and feelings when their blood sugar is too low. You may have several of these symptoms or you may have different ones. You will usually have the same feelings each time you have a reaction.

## **Do these feelings always mean that I am having a reaction?**

You may have signs of a reaction when your blood sugar is coming down, even though your blood sugar is not below 70 mg/dL. This can also happen if your blood sugar has been high for a time. You can't always count on the way you feel to tell you if your blood sugar is really low. Checking your blood sugar is the only way to be sure.

## **How do I treat a reaction?**

You treat a low blood sugar by taking something that contains sugar. For example, fruit juice, a regular soft drink, raisins, lifesavers or fruit. You can also buy glucose tablets at the drug store. Examples of how to treat a low blood sugar reaction are listed below. Liquids work faster than food and food with fat and sugar (like chocolate or ice cream) take longer to raise your blood sugar level.

One way to remember is the rule of 15s: Check your blood sugar level. Then, take 15 grams of carbohydrate. Wait 15 minutes and check your blood sugar level again. If it is still below 70 mg/dL, repeat the treatment and check your blood sugar again 15 minutes later.

You need to treat a reaction right away. Don't just lie down and wait for it to go away. If a reaction isn't treated, you can pass out. Even if you don't feel any symptoms, you need to treat your low blood sugar whenever it is less than 70 mg/dL. If you feel symptoms but you cannot check your blood sugar, go ahead and treat the reaction. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

Always keep something handy to treat a low blood sugar reaction - in your bedside table, purse, briefcase, pocket, glove box and desk. Teach your family about your symptoms and what to do when you are low. Wearing identification that says you have diabetes can ensure you get the help you need when you are away from home.

Never drive when your blood sugar is low. Driving with a low blood sugar is just like driving drunk. If you feel as if you are having a reaction, pull over, treat the reaction and wait until your blood sugar is on target before you drive again.

## **Treating a Low Blood Glucose**

**If your blood sugar is 50-70 mg/dL, take 15 grams of carbohydrate.**

**If your blood sugar is less than 50 mg/dL, take 30 grams of carbohydrate.**

**Wait 15 minutes and re-check your blood sugar. If your blood sugar is still less than 70 mg/dL, take another 15 grams of carbohydrate.**

<b>What to Take</b>	<b>Amount (15 grams of carbohydrate)</b>
Glucose tablets	3 to 4
Regular soft drinks	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Orange or apple juice	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Grape or cranberry juice	1/3 cup (3 ounces)
Milk (no fat or low fat)	1 cup (8 ounces)
Hard candy	4 to 10
Raisins	2 tablespoons
Sugar packets	1 packet
Regular gelatin snack cup	3.5 ounces
Fruit cup, in its own juice	4 ounces
Fruit Roll-up	1 large roll

## **What should I do after a reaction?**

Once you are sure the reaction is over, make a note in your record. Write down what your blood sugars were, the symptoms you felt, and how you treated the reaction. If you have two or more reactions in a week, call your provider. Your medicines may need to be adjusted.

## **Whenever you have a reaction, ask yourself these questions:**

1. What was I doing before the reaction?
2. What do I think caused the reaction?
3. Did the treatment work?
4. Was my blood sugar on target for the rest of the day after the reaction?

Developed by the Michigan Diabetes Research and Training Center, **(NIH grant P60DK02572)**, 2012

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