

Important to know

- It is important to always carry your blood glucose meter and treatment for low blood glucose with you in case you need it.
- If you feel the symptoms of hypoglycemia but are not able to test your blood glucose, assume your blood glucose is low and treat using the items listed on the previous page.
- **If your blood glucose is severely low, you may be unable to treat yourself. In this instance, you will need the help of another person to treat the low blood glucose. Make sure someone knows your signs and symptoms of low blood glucose and how to treat it so they can help you.**
- **If you are unconscious, you will not be able to swallow properly and should not be given anything orally. Someone should give you an injection of glucagon and call an ambulance immediately. (Note: glucagon may not work in the presence of alcohol.)**
- If you have **type 1** diabetes discuss the use of glucagon with your healthcare team.
- If you are taking **Acarbose (Prandase)**, you should use **only** the following to treat low blood glucose: 15 g of glucose in the form of glucose tablets OR 1 Tbsp (15 mL) of honey** OR 1 Tbsp (15 mL) of corn syrup OR 1 cup (250 mL) milk. If you use milk, remember it is part of your total milk allowance for the day. Acarbose (Prandase) is not recommended for people with diabetes who have significant kidney disease.
- Wear a Medic Alert bracelet if you take insulin or diabetes pills.
- Remember to check your blood glucose meter on a regular basis to make sure that the meter is giving you an accurate reading.

HYPOGLYCEMIA

LOW BLOOD GLUCOSE

Practical Tips for People with

Diabetes

and

Chronic Kidney Disease

December 2008

The material in this pamphlet was adapted from:

Beyond the Basics Committee. Hypoglycemia. In: *Beyond the Basics Resource*.
Toronto, ON: Canadian Diabetes Association; 2008.

What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia or **low blood glucose** happens when the amount of blood glucose (sugar in your blood) has dropped below 4 mmol/L. It may also be referred to as **low blood sugar** or **a low** or **a reaction**.

If you experience low blood glucose often, discuss this with your health care team. They may recommend that you take less insulin or diabetic pills. As kidney function decreases, insulin and diabetic pills stay in the body longer and you may have more reactions.

What are the signs of a low blood glucose level?

You may feel:

Shaky
Sweaty
Weak/Tired
Confused
Nervous
Blurred vision
Headachy
Fast heart rate
Hunger
Dizzy
Numbness, Tingling in Tongue or Lips

Other people may notice:

Irritable/Mood Swings
Sweaty
Pale
Acting or speaking strangely
Restless sleep

What could cause a low blood glucose level?

- Eating less than usual or delayed meals or snacks
- More physical activity than usual
- Taking too much medication (diabetes pills or insulin) or a change in medications
- Drinking alcohol
- Recent weight loss
- Kidney disease

Steps to take to treat a low blood glucose level

1. Test your blood glucose using your blood glucose meter.
2. If your blood glucose level is less than **4 mmol/L**, take one of the following choices (**15 grams of carbohydrate**)
 - 3 BD® glucose tablets or 5 Dextrosol® tablets
 - ¾ cup (175 mL) cranberry juice* or lemonade sweetened with sugar or regular pop*
 - 6 Lifesavers® (chew and swallow) or 6 jelly beans
 - 3 teaspoons (15 mL) or 3 packets of table sugar dissolved in 2 ounces (60 mL) water
 - 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of honey** or corn syrup

If your blood glucose level is less than **3 mmol/L**, take one of the following choices (**20 grams of carbohydrate**)

- 4 BD® glucose tablets or 7 Dextrosol® tablets
- 1 cup (250 mL) cranberry juice* or lemonade sweetened with sugar or regular pop*
- 8 Lifesavers® (chew and swallow) or 8 jelly beans
- 4 teaspoons (20 mL) or 4 packets of table sugar dissolved in 2 ounces (60 mL) water
- 4 teaspoons (20 mL) of honey** or corn syrup

*Avoid cola (phosphorus) and orange juice (potassium).

DO NOT use **honey for children under 1yr old.

If you need to limit your fluid intake, use candy or glucose tablets instead of fluids. If you use juice or regular pop, include as part of your total fluid allowance for the day.

3. Wait 15 minutes. Re-test your blood glucose. If it is below 4 mmol/L take another 15g of carbohydrate or 20 g of carbohydrate if it is below 3 mmol/L. Continue to re-test and re-treat as necessary until your blood glucose is above 4 mmol/L.

4. If your next meal is more than one hour away, or you are going to be active, eat a snack containing 1 Carbohydrate choice and 1 Meat & Alternatives choice.