

Hypoglycemia Guidelines



The University of Rochester Medical Center's commitment to help Rochester become America's healthiest community by 2020

What is Hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia (insulin reaction) is the condition that happens when your blood glucose level falls below its normal range (usually below 70 mg/dl.) Untreated hypoglycemia is an emergency condition but is easy to prevent and correct.

Hypoglycemia can be the result of:

- Eating too little food or missing a meal
- Too much exercise or activity
- Taking too much insulin or medication

Symptoms

Several symptoms can warn you when your blood glucose level is too low. You should always test your blood glucose when you have any of the following symptoms:

- Sweating
- Shaking
- Rapid heart beat
- Light-headedness
- Confusion
- Mental slowness, drowsiness
- Seizures
- Nervousness, irritability
- Personality change
- Hunger
- Headache
- Blurred vision
- Nausea

Severe warning symptoms:

- Unconsciousness
- Coma

How to treat hypoglycemia:

If you are conscious and able to swallow, you should eat or drink 1/2 oz to 3/4 oz of a fast acting sugar when you have warning symptoms. You can get this sugar from any of the following:

- 4-8 oz of fruit juice
- 4-8 oz of regular soft drink
- 4-8 sugar cubes
- 1/2 candy bar
- 2 teaspoons of honey
- 2 large marshmallows
- 1/2 cup regular gelatin
- 7 jelly beans
- 6 Life Savers

Following this, you should rest for 5-10 minutes to let your body absorb the sugar. If you do not feel better within 10 minutes, repeat drinking orange juice, etc. If the reaction still does not subside, contact your doctor immediately.

Helpful Hints:

Diet changes that may help to prevent symptoms of low blood sugar include:

- 1 Make sure you are eating enough calories based on your own needs
- 2 Carbohydrate restriction may not be practical or necessary. Protein or fat should be eaten along with carbohydrate type foods (many carbohydrate type foods include some protein and/or fat). This may help to control the response of the blood sugar to the meal. However, be smart when choosing your protein and fat. Choosing leaner meats (such as fish, chicken, turkey, lean beef and legumes) and healthier fats (olive and canola oil) will help to control your intake of saturated fat and cholesterol.
- 3 Liquids of high sugar content should be limited or avoided (depending on your individual tolerance) because of the quick and dramatic blood sugar response.
- 4 Research suggests that foods should not be eliminated based on sugar content alone. Rather, it may be helpful for a person to keep a food diary and relate what specific foods may have caused the low blood sugar response.
- 5 Some individuals may do better with 6 smaller meals instead of 3 large meals.

A healthy meal plan based on the Food Guide Pyramid and the Dietary Guidelines that include a variety of foods from each food group is the best approach for treating Reactive Hypoglycemia or low blood sugar.

Anything's possible.

STRONG  HEALTH