

Let's Talk About...

Low Blood Glucose

Low blood glucose can happen to anyone, but it's most common in children with diabetes. If you have type 1 diabetes, it's important to stay within your target range. **At school, it's best to be between 80 and 150 mg/dL.** If your blood glucose goes below this range, you can get hypoglycemia [HI-po-gly-SEE-me-uh], or very low blood glucose. Hypoglycemia can be a life-threatening condition.

What are the symptoms of low blood glucose?

You will probably have one or more of these symptoms when your blood glucose gets low:

- Shakiness or dizziness
- Sweating
- Hunger
- Headache
- Pale skin color
- Fainting or seizure
- Clumsy or jerky movements
- Trouble paying attention or confusion
- Tingling around your mouth
- Suddenly feeling moody, nervous, irritable, or like you want to cry for no reason at all

Be sure to tell someone if you have any of these symptoms. The people around you may not know that you're not feeling well.

Checking your blood glucose regularly will help you know when it's getting low and allow you to treat it before it becomes a problem.

What do I do if I think my blood glucose is low?

Be ready to act quickly if your blood glucose is low.

- **Check your levels if a blood glucose meter is available.** If you don't have a meter and you have symptoms, act as though you have low blood glucose.
- **Treat low blood glucose with 15 grams of rapid-acting carbohydrates (carbs).**

Examples include:

- ½ cup juice or regular soda (not diet)
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 3 to 5 pieces hard candy
- 1 cup skim milk
- 1 Fruit Roll-Up
- 3 to 4 glucose tablets or 1 tube glucose gel
- 11 Skittles
- 8 Lifesavers (not sugar-free)

Note: Some carbs are absorbed more slowly, such as candy bars or high-fat foods, and should not be used.

- **If blood glucose is low before a meal, give 15 grams of rapid-acting carbs.** Wait to give the usual meal carb dose until you've begun to eat.
- **Wait about 15 minutes for the treatment to work.** Don't keep eating until the symptoms go away. If you eat too much, your blood glucose can get too high.
- **Check your blood glucose 15 minutes after you eat.** If it's still below 80 mg/dL, have another snack with 15 grams of carbs. Check your blood glucose levels again after 15 minutes. Repeat until your blood glucose is above 80 mg/dL.
- **If your blood glucose is between 80 mg/dL and 100 mg/dL** and it will be 30 minutes or more before your next meal or snack, have another small snack with 15 grams of carbs and some protein. Check again in 1 hour.

How can I help prevent low blood glucose?

Blood glucose often gets too low:

- When you miss or don't finish your meal or snack, especially after taking insulin
- During or after exercise

Your healthcare team will help you make a plan for medicine, food, and exercise to prevent low blood glucose. It's important to follow this plan closely.

- **Eat regular meals and snacks.** When you don't eat regularly or go a long time between meals, your blood glucose can drop.
- **Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.** Medicine can cause low blood glucose if you take the wrong amount or take it at the wrong time. (For example, giving yourself too much insulin can cause low blood glucose. This is sometimes called an "insulin reaction.")
- **Try to get the same amount of exercise every day.** Exercising harder than usual can cause low blood glucose. This is because your body uses more glucose when you're exercising hard. Exercise is important for your health, but check your blood glucose regularly during your activities to stay safe. Keep an extra snack or two with you (see list above for rapid-acting carbs) just in case your blood sugar gets too low.

Once you get used to balancing your medicine with food and exercise, it will be easier to keep your blood glucose levels in your target range. However, it's always best to be prepared in case you have low blood glucose.

If you have diabetes, wear a medical ID that includes an emergency contact number, your doctor's name, and a place to look for more information (like a wallet card or your smartphone). You can wear this on your neck or wrist so emergency responders or people around you know you need treatment right away.

What should I tell my caregivers about low blood glucose?

Even if you check your blood glucose regularly, low blood glucose can happen. Tell your caregivers (family, friends, babysitters, teachers, coaches, and the parents of your friends) about low blood glucose so they can help you. Make sure they know:

- The signs and symptoms of low blood glucose
- To call 911 if you faint or have a seizure
- When to give carbohydrates, what kind of carbohydrates (rapid-acting or low-fat), and how much (15 to 30 grams) usually works best
- When to use glucagon and how to use your emergency glucagon kit

When should I call my doctor?

If you think you're about to pass out, get help right away.

Your parent or caregiver should call your healthcare provider if:

- You can't control your low blood glucose, even after trying to make it better
- You have more than 2 periods of low blood glucose in a week and don't know why
- You have repeated low glucose readings during a certain time of day

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