

Managing Low Glucose

When You Take Certain Diabetes Medicines

Anyone with type 1 or type 2 diabetes can experience low glucose (blood sugar). Even if your glucose is high most of the time right now, certain medicines like insulins or sulfonylureas (like glipizide), can cause it to drop too low. Low glucose occurs when levels drop below 70 mg/dL (70 milligrams of glucose per deciliter of blood).

Glucose levels that drop too low can be dangerous and must be treated immediately.

In this handout, you'll learn:

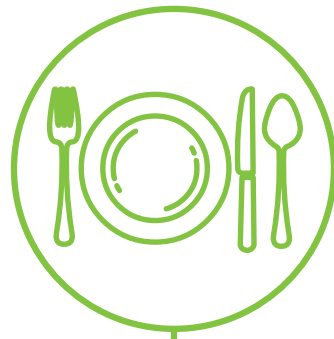
- What can cause low glucose
- Signs and symptoms of low glucose
- How to treat low glucose
- How to help prevent low glucose



Low Glucose: Common Causes



Taking some medicines



Eating less food than your usual amount



Skipped or delayed meals



Doing more physical activity than your usual



Drinking alcohol without eating

Low Glucose: Signs and Symptoms

Even if you feel fine, you must take action because glucose levels can drop quickly. Some people may not notice symptoms right away, or at all, while others may feel them strongly. That's why it's important to check your glucose regularly, even if you don't have symptoms.

Some common symptoms of low glucose are:

Lightheaded



Weak



Unable to concentrate



Anxious



Confusion



Shakey, sweaty



Irritable



Rapid heartbeat

Overnight Low Glucose Symptoms: Overnight low glucose may have different symptoms compared to daytime low glucose. If you are experiencing night sweats, nightmares or feeling very tired the next day, talk to your diabetes care team. If you notice an overnight low glucose, treat it right away.

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Low Glucose: How to TREAT It

Immediate Actions Needed: Glucose levels can drop quickly and become severe, leading to confusion and trouble walking or talking. If untreated, it can cause fainting, seizures, or even death. If your glucose is low, stop what you're doing and treat it right away by consuming fast-acting carbohydrates like glucose tablets, juice, or regular soda to reach normal glucose levels.

Use **TREAT** to help you remember how to treat a low glucose, which is considered below 70 mg/dL.

1. **Take** note of your glucose level to see if it is below 70 mg/dL.
2. **Rule** of 15: Consume 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrates (carbs). It may take up to 15 minutes for your glucose to get above 70 mg/dL.
3. **Explain** to others around you that you are experiencing low glucose.
4. **Assess** the timing of your next meal; eat a snack if you need something sooner.
5. **Think** about what may have caused your glucose to drop and talk to your diabetes care team to determine if your medicine needs adjusting.

You can use glucose tablets or gels to get your 15 grams of carbs



4 glucose tablets



1 tube of glucose gel by mouth

Or you can treat with these other options:



Half a cup of fruit juice



6 jelly beans



Half a cup of full-sugar soda



1 tablespoon of sugar or honey

Keep one of these readily available **AT ALL TIMES** on your nightstand, in your bag, etc.

If your glucose gets very low, it's an emergency and you may need help right away.

Low Glucose: Prevention

- >> **Monitor your glucose regularly** and work with your diabetes care team to find the best way to do this.
- >> **Always eat food**, if you drink alcohol.
- >> Eat a **snack** if you must delay a meal.
- >> **Develop a plan for physical activity** with your diabetes care team. Discuss ways to avoid lows with physical activity.
- >> **Contact your diabetes care team if you're sick** and can't eat. Once you're well, talk with them about developing a sick-day plan.

Your diabetes management is unique to you. Work with your diabetes care and education specialist and diabetes care team to create a personalized low glucose prevention plan that fits your needs.