

Low Blood Sugar

Low blood sugar means not having enough sugar, also called glucose, in the blood. Low blood sugar is also called hypoglycemia, insulin shock or insulin reaction. Glucose is needed by the body's cells. A normal blood sugar level is 70 to 100. A blood sugar level below 70 is low.

Causes

Sometimes the cause is not known, but it may be from:

- Too much insulin or diabetes pills
- Meals that are skipped or late
- Too much exercise or unplanned exercise

Signs

There may be no warning signs or you may:

- Feel dizzy, shaky, nervous, weak or tired
- Sweat
- Feel hungry
- Feel moody or grumpy or not think clearly
- Not be able to speak
- Have blurred vision
- Feel a fast heart beat
- Feel numb around the mouth or lips
- Have a headache

Your Care

When your blood sugar is low, you need to eat or drink food with sugar. **Do not eat too much.** Your blood sugar may go too high. Eat or drink one of these:

- ½ cup or 120 milliliters of juice or soda (no diet, sugar free or calorie free drinks)
- 3 or 4 glucose tablets
- 1 tablespoon or 15 milliliters of sugar
- 1 cup or 240 milliliters of milk

Check your blood sugar in 15 minutes. If your blood sugar is still less than 70 or if you are not feeling better, eat or drink another serving of food or drink from the list.

When your blood sugar is 70 or more, you still need to eat something to keep your blood sugar from dropping again.

- If it is time for your next meal soon, eat your normal meal.
- If your next meal is more than an hour away, eat a snack. Try one of these:
 - Half a sandwich and 1 cup or 240 milliliters of milk, **or**
 - 3 crackers, 2 ounces of cheese and a small apple

To Prevent Low Blood Sugar

- Follow your meal plan. Eat meals and snacks at the same time each day. Do not miss or delay meals.
- Check and record your blood sugar levels. If you have low blood sugars more than 2 times in a week, call your doctor or diabetes educator. Changes may need to be made to your diet, medicine or exercise routine.
- Take your diabetes medicine as directed. Do not take extra diabetes medicine without your doctor's advice.
- Exercise regularly.

To Stay Safe

- Keep glucose tablets and food such as crackers and juice with you at all times.
- Tell other people who work or live with you that you have diabetes and how to treat low blood sugar.
- Wear a medical bracelet or necklace to tell others that you have diabetes during a medical emergency.
- If you have Type 1 diabetes, people close to you should learn how to give a glucagon shot. Glucagon is a hormone used to raise blood sugar when a person is not alert or awake. A nurse can teach them how to give a glucagon shot.
- Call your doctor when you have frequent low blood sugars or wide swings from high to low blood sugar levels.
- Talk with your doctor and dietitian **before** starting a weight loss diet.
- Keep all your appointments with your doctor, diabetes nurse and dietitian.
- Call your doctor, nurse or dietitian with any questions or concerns.