

What is Low Blood Sugar? Hypoglycemia

For Children and Families

This handout explains the causes, signs and treatment for low blood sugar in diabetes. Low blood sugar is also called **hypoglycemia** (high-poh-gligh-see-mee-uh).

What is low blood sugar?

Your blood sugar is low if it falls below 80 mg/dl (using a serum-based glucose monitor). A glucose monitor is also called a glucometer (glue – kohm – uh – ter). Low blood sugar can come on very fast. If it is not treated you could pass out (become unconscious) or have a seizure (convulsion).

What causes low blood sugar?

Low blood sugar can be caused by:

- Not eating enough food or not eating at the right time.
- Taking too much insulin.
- Extra exercise or activity.

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What are the signs of low blood sugar?

Circle or point to any signs you've had and learn to recognize them early. The signs of low blood sugar may be:



Fast heartbeat



Sweating



Shaking



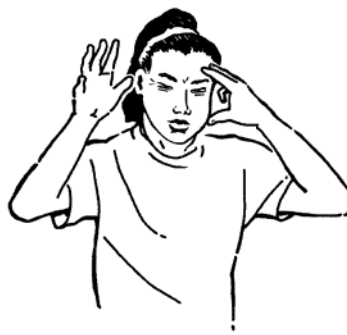
Headache



Chills and cold sweat



Hunger



Vision problems



Feeling sick to your stomach



Feeling cranky, low or like crying



Feeling dizzy or lightheaded



Feeling nervous or anxious



Feeling weak or tired



Tingling or a numbness of your lips or tongue

How do I treat low blood sugar?

Follow these steps to treat low blood sugar:

1. Check your blood sugar to see if it is below 80mg/dl.
2. Eat or drink something with sugar in it. A simple carbohydrate (kar – bow – *high* – drate) contains sugar. A carbohydrate is a form of sugar or starch that is a major energy source for the human body.
Items that provide 10 to 15 grams of simple carbohydrates to eat or drink when your blood sugar is low are listed under step 5. This is the amount of carbohydrate needed to help bring your blood sugar level back up when it gets too low.
3. Wait about 15 minutes, then check your blood sugar.
4. If your blood sugar is still too low (or if you don't feel better), eat another 10-15 gram serving of carbohydrate and test again after 15 minutes.
5. Once your blood sugar begins to return to normal, eat an extra snack. Your snack should include a carbohydrate and a protein (like cheese and crackers).

Foods and Drinks with 10 to 15 grams of Simple Carbohydrates:

- ½ - ¾ cup of fruit juice
- ½ - ¾ cup of soda pop with sugar in it
- 4-6 sugar cubes
- 5-6 Lifesavers
- 2-3 glucose tablets
- 1 Tablespoon of cake frosting (or gel) that comes in a tube
- 1 Tablespoon of sugar
- 1 Tablespoon of honey
- 1 Tablespoon of corn syrup

If blood sugar is so low that your child can't drink or swallow, give Glucagon emergency kit and call 911.

PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN

- Children's Resource Line (206) 987-2500 or (866) 987-2500 *toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho*
- Your Child's Health Care Provider
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International:
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005-4001
1-800-533-CURE (2873)
www.jdf.org
- American Diabetes Association:
1701 North Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311
1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider. Adapted with permission from Children's Diabetes Education Handbook and Denver Hospital and Health Authority's piece on Low Blood Sugar, by the Center for Children with Special Needs, a program of Children's Hospital, with funding from the Washington State Department of Health Children with Special Health Care Needs Program. www.cshcn.org

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