Low Blood Glucose (Hypoglycemia)

Low blood glucose (blood sugar), sometimes just called a low, is when your blood glucose levels have fallen low enough that you need to take action to bring them back to your target range. This is usually when your blood glucose is less than 70 mg/dL. However, talk to your doctor about your own blood glucose targets, if you’re at risk for your blood glucose going too low, and what level is too low for you. If you don’t take steps to bring glucose levels back to normal, you could pass out or have other serious complications.

What are the symptoms? Each person’s reaction to low blood glucose is different. Learn your own signs and symptoms of when your blood glucose is low. Taking time to write the symptoms you experience down may help you learn your own symptoms so that it’s easier to recognize them.

Sometimes, if you have lows too often you may become less likely to feel the symptoms. This is called hypoglycemia unawareness. Talk to your doctor if you start having trouble noticing that your blood glucose is low.

Signs and symptoms of low blood glucose include:

- Feeling shaky
- Being nervous or anxious
- Sweating, chills, clamminess
- Mood swings, irritability, impatience
- Fast heartbeat
- Confusion
- Feeling light-headed or dizzy
- Hunger
- Nausea
- Color draining from skin (pallor)
- Feeling sleepy
- Feeling weak, having no energy
- Blurred/impaired vision
- Tingling or numbness in lips, tongue, cheeks
- Headaches
- Coordination problems, clumsiness
- Nightmares or crying out in sleep
- Seizures

continued
What should I do?

If you think your blood glucose is low, check it. If your blood glucose is 70 mg/dL or below, follow the “15-15 rule.”

**RULE OF 15**

Have 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrates (carbs) to raise your blood glucose.

Wait 15 minutes, then recheck your blood glucose again.

- If it’s still below 70 mg/dL, or your continuous glucose monitor (CGM) doesn’t show your blood glucose trending up, have another 15 grams of fast-acting carbs.
- If your blood glucose is above 70 mg/dL, or is trending up on your CGM, and if it’s NOT a mealtime, have a protein and carbohydrate snack (example: cheese crackers) to keep your blood glucose from dropping low again before your next meal.

**Sources of 15 grams of fast-acting carbs:**

- Glucose tablets (see instructions)
- Glucose gel tube (see instructions)
- 1/2 cup (4 ounces) of juice or regular soda (not diet)
- 1 tablespoon of sugar or corn syrup (or, if older than 1 year, honey)
- Hard candies or jellybeans (see label for how many to eat)

Talk to your diabetes care team to find out if you’re at risk of experiencing severe hypoglycemia and need glucagon to treat it.

Make a note about any episodes of low blood glucose and talk with your diabetes care team about why it happened. They can suggest ways to prevent low blood glucose in the future.

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