

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Diabetes and Low Blood Sugar (Blood Glucose) Hypoglycemia

What is low blood sugar (blood glucose)?

A low blood sugar or blood glucose level is a level that is below 70. It is important to prevent low blood sugar! Blood sugar and blood glucose are words that mean the same thing. They may also be called hypoglycemia.

What may cause low blood sugar?

You might have low blood sugar if you:

- Eat too few carbohydrates, or skip or delay a meal
- Take too much insulin or too many pills for diabetes
- Are more active than usual.

What are signs and symptoms of low blood sugar?

You may have some of these symptoms if you blood sugar is low:



SWEATING



HEADACHE



SHAKING



DIZZINESS



**WEAKNESS,
FATIGUE**



IRRITABLE



FAST HEARTBEAT



ANXIOUS

These symptoms can get worse and you may pass out if you don't treat the low blood sugar.

Images from: "Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)." 2009 Novo Nordisk Inc., 126379R2, December 2009. Accessed: July 28, 2010, from www.novomedlink.com.

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What can you do if you have low blood sugar?

Remember the 15:15 Rule

- If your blood sugar feels low, check your blood sugar right away.
- If it is below **70**, eat or drink **15 grams** of carbohydrate:
 - 1/2 cup (4 oz.) of juice or regular soda
 - 3-4 glucose tablets or 1 package glucose gel (keep this with you)
 - 1 tablespoon of sugar, honey or syrup
 - This should raise your blood sugar by about 50 points.



- If it is below **50**, eat or drink **30 grams** of carbohydrate.
- Check your blood sugar again in **15 minutes**. If your blood sugar is not above 100, eat or drink another 15 grams of carbohydrate.
 - Do not drive, do physically active work or do other activities that can be a harm to yourself or someone else until you know your blood sugar has returned to above 100.

Do not treat low blood sugar with: candy bars, peanut butter sandwich, chocolate, etc. These will take longer to raise your blood sugar and will likely raise it too high.

Planning for a low blood sugar

- Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace stating that you have diabetes.
- Carry an emergency pack at all times. This should include glucose tablets or gel, your glucose meter and strips and other emergency medication your health care provider has recommended.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of LUNG LINE®. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician. PTE.294
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