

Hypoglycemia

What causes hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)?

Hypoglycemia can occur when your blood sugar falls below 70 mg/dl. This level may vary from person to person, depending on how sensitive your body is to the symptoms. Below is a list of common causes of low blood sugar:

- ◆ Getting more exercise than usual
- ◆ Too much diabetes medication/insulin
- ◆ Skipping a meal
- ◆ Alcoholic beverages

What are the symptoms of hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemic symptoms can begin quickly, it is important to be familiar with the symptoms:

- ◆ Shaking
- ◆ Tired
- ◆ Rapid heartbeat
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Irritable
- ◆ Blurred vision
- ◆ Hungry
- ◆ Confused
- ◆ Sweating
- ◆ No symptoms at all

When should my doctor be contacted?

- ◆ If you begin experiencing frequent episodes of low blood sugar
- ◆ Unable to swallow
- ◆ Have a seizure
- ◆ Become unconscious

How do you treat hypoglycemia?

Low blood sugar needs to be treated right away. A low blood sugar level will continue to drop unless it is treated. When treating hypoglycemia, you want to follow the 15:15 rule. Consume 15g of carbohydrates (sugar) every 15 minutes until blood sugar levels are within normal limits.

Each of the following contains 15g of carbohydrates:

- ◆ 3 glucose tablets (available at pharmacy)
- ◆ 4 oz. fruit juice or regular soda
- ◆ 6 or 7 hard candies (not sugar free)
- ◆ 1 Tbs. sugar or honey

After consuming one of the above items, wait 15 minutes and retest your blood sugar. If it remains low or symptoms continue, consume an additional 15g of carbohydrates and wait another 15 minutes. If your next meal is more than an hour away, follow the carbohydrates with a protein source (half a sandwich, or add cheese or peanut butter with crackers) to help keep blood sugar levels from dropping low again.