

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics  
**Patient Information**

## Hypoglycaemia

### Information for people with diabetes

Hypoglycaemia or hypo is another name for low blood sugar – that is less than 4 mmol/L (millimoles per litre).

#### Why does it occur?

- Not eating enough carbohydrate or missing a meal
- Injecting too much insulin
- Exercising without eating extra carbohydrate
- Drinking too much alcohol

#### What are the symptoms?

- Sweating
- Feeling hungry
- Anxiety and irritability
- Tingling lips
- Going pale
- Fast pulse and palpitations
- Headache
- Trembling

#### What to do

At the first signs of a hypo, or if you see that you have a blood glucose result less than 4 mmol/L, you must have something to eat or drink. Take the simplest food that is quickly absorbed, something sugary such as:

- 5 - 7 glucose tablets/4 - 5 Glucotabs®
- 3 - 4 rounded teaspoons of sugar
- 3 - 4 jelly babies
- 1 small glass of Lucozade® (90-120 mls)
- Glass of coke, not diet (150-200 mls)
- Glass of fruit juice, unsweetened (150-200mls)
- 1½ – 2 Glucogel® tubes

**If you don't feel better again after ten minutes, take one of the above again.**

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Information

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Author: Sandra Hood  
Role: Diabetes Dietitian  
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If a hypo occurs shortly before a meal or snack is due, eat the meal or snack as soon as possible and make sure it includes an extra portion of carbohydrate. Take your insulin as normal if it is due.

If a hypo occurs when no meal or snack is due, take a snack following the sugar or sugary drink such as:

- a sandwich
- a scone
- a piece of fruit
- a cereal bar
- a bowl of cereal
- biscuits and milk

## Points to remember

- Carry sugar or glucose tablets with you at all times
- Always carry diabetic identification
- Inform friends and colleagues what to do in the event of a hypo
- Remember when treating a hypo to always follow sugary foods with a starchy carbohydrate or the next meal if it's due
- Take your insulin as normal if it's due

## Useful contacts

If you have questions, please ask a Diabetes Dietitian or Diabetes UK:

- Dorset County Hospital Diabetes Centre  
Tel: **01305 255130**
- Diabetes UK Careline  
Tel: **0345 123 2399** (charges apply, see website for details)  
Email: [careline@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:careline@diabetes.org.uk)