



Nutrition and Dietetics

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 after ten minutes, take one of the above again.

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 is due
- Take your insulin as normal if it is due

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please contact 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

About this leaflet:

Author: Sandra Hood, Diabetes Dietician
Written: February 2016
Updated & Approved: November 2020
Review date: November 2023
Edition: V2

If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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