

# TREATING LOW BLOOD SUGAR



## WHAT IS LOW BLOOD SUGAR?

A low blood sugar level is when your blood sugar falls below 70 mg/dl.

In most cases, people will have symptoms of low blood sugar when their level drops below 70 mg/dl. But not always. So, it is important to test your sugar level before meals, bedtime and before driving. You should also test before and after exercise or whenever you think you are low.

No one can totally avoid getting low blood sugar. Low blood sugar is **hypoglycemia**. There are two kinds: mild and severe.

Mild hypoglycemia is something you feel and treat by yourself by eating carbs. This is common; although the better you dose your insulin the less common it will be.

Severe hypoglycemia means you pass out and someone else has to help treat you so you recover.

### Mild Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar):

It can make you:

- Shaky
- Nervous
- Dizzy
- Hungry
- Sweaty
- Have a pounding or rapid heart beat
- Have numbness or tingling in your mouth or lips

If your sugar falls even lower, you may:

- Have a headache
- Have blurred vision
- Not act like yourself
- Have trouble concentrating
- Have slow or slurred speech
- Feel irritated
- Feel confused

If you have low blood sugar at night while you are sleeping, you may:

- Cry out
- Have nightmares
- Have night sweats (with damp sheets or pajamas)
- Wake up groggy or with a headache

### Severe Hypoglycemia (extremely low blood sugar):

Severe means that you need someone else to treat your low blood sugar reaction because you have:

- Had a seizure or
- Passed out

Why is my blood sugar going low?



### What causes low blood sugar?

Low blood sugar happens when there is too much insulin in your body and not enough carbs. Here are some things that cause low blood sugar:

- Skipping meals
- Eating less than normal
- Activity that makes the heart beat faster or the body sweats more than usual
- Taking too much insulin
- Injury, illness, infection, or emotional stress
- Exercising more
- Drinking alcohol like beer, wine and hard liquors



## HOW CAN I TREAT LOW BLOOD SUGAR?

How you treat low blood sugar depends on whether the low is mild or severe.

Mild low blood sugar means you can sometimes feel the signs or discover it from testing your blood sugar. You can treat yourself for low blood sugar. You can eat or drink to correct it.

As soon as you feel you have low blood sugar or your sugar testing tells you that your sugar is low, treat it right away. When you do this, it helps prevent severe low blood sugar. Severe low blood sugar is when your blood sugar falls very fast and low and you do not have time to treat it. You should do all you can to avoid severe low blood sugar.



When I go low, I start to feel shaky and dizzy. Sometimes I panic and eat too much and then I go high.

That used to happen to me too. Now I keep fast acting carbs close by. I keep jelly beans next to my bed. I do not even have to get out of bed.



## TIPS FOR TREATING MILD LOWS

- Always keep food or drink with you, whether you take insulin with a shot or a pump.
- Do not eat high fat foods like chocolate and chips. They do not work well because they take longer to digest and longer for the sugar to move into the blood.
- Do not eat or drink too much sugar.
  - Try to treat a low blood sugar with 15-30 grams of sugar. If you treat a low with too much sugar, then you will swing back up again and treating this high can cause another low.
- Have a glass of water after you have had your 15 to 30 grams of sugar. This may make you feel better sooner.

# THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TREATING MILD LOWS

## The 15 – 15 Rule

To treat mild low blood sugar, use the 15 – 15 Rule: This means eat or drink 15 grams of fast-acting carbs and then check your blood sugar in 15 minutes.

If your blood sugar is 50 to 70 mg/dl:

1. Eat 15 grams of fast-acting, or simple carbs.
2. Recheck your blood sugar in 15 minutes.
3. If your blood sugar is still below 70 mg/dl, repeat steps 1 and 2 every 15 minutes until your blood sugar returns to your target range.

If blood sugar is less than 50 mg/dl start treatment with 25 to 30 grams of fast-acting or simple carbs. Sometimes your blood sugar will drop very fast and you will have a severe low blood sugar. Ask your diabetes care team for advice on what to do after you have had a low blood sugar level.

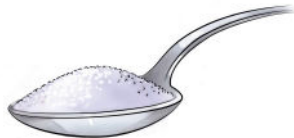


## Foods with 15 Grams of Fast-acting Carbs

3 to 4 sugar tablets



1 tablespoon of sugar



5 jellybeans or gumdrops



4 oz of juice



4 oz of regular soda



8 oz of low-fat or non-fat milk



1 tablespoon of honey

