

# How to Handle Low Blood Sugar

## ***What is low blood sugar?***

Low blood sugar (also called hypoglycemia) is when your blood sugar is 70 mg/dL or lower (or the number your health care provider tells you). If your blood sugar is too low and you do not eat something right away you could fall, pass out, have a seizure, or go into a coma.

## ***What causes low blood sugar?***

Low blood sugar happens when:

- You don't eat enough food, you don't eat on time, or you skip a meal
- You are taking too much of your diabetes medicine
- You are more active than usual
- You drink alcohol without eating any food

## ***How do I know if my blood sugar is too low?***

You may feel different when you have low blood sugar. You may feel shaky, dizzy, sweaty, or anxious. You may get confused.

But some people do not know when their blood sugar gets too low until it is dangerously low. This can happen if you have had a lot of low blood sugars in the past.

If you have had low blood sugars, you should wear a medical alert bracelet that says you have diabetes. This is so people will know how to help you if you pass out.

## ***What should I do if my blood sugar is low?***

If you feel like your blood sugar is low, check your blood sugar with your blood glucose meter. If it is low, eat carbohydrates right away. You should always carry a fast-acting carbohydrate snack with you. A rule to follow is to eat 15 grams of carbohydrates, wait 15 minutes, and then check your blood sugar again. If it is still low, eat another 15 grams of carbohydrates and check your blood sugar again in 15 minutes.

After your blood sugar gets better, you should eat a snack or meal at your usual mealtime. But if your mealtime will not be for an hour or more, you should be sure to eat a snack.

## ***How do I know the right amount of carbohydrates to eat?***

If your sugar is low, you need to eat about 15 grams of carbohydrates. But carbohydrates with a lot of fat in them will not work as quickly. Some good choices that contain about 15 grams of carbohydrates include:

Glucose tablets (3-4 tablets)	Hard candy (5-6 pieces)
Glucose gel (one small tube)	Non-fat milk (8 ounces)
Sugar (1 tablespoon or 5 sugar cubes)	Orange juice (4 ounces)
Corn syrup, honey, or syrup (1 tablespoon)	Raisins (2 tablespoons)
Crackers (4-5 saltine crackers)	Soda (not diet) (4 ounces)

If you take *Preco*se (acarbose) or *Glyset* (miglitol) for your diabetes, you must use glucose gel or tablets, non-fat milk, or honey. Other kinds of carbohydrates will not work quickly enough if you take these medicines.

## ***What if someone passes out because of low blood sugar?***

People who pass out or can't swallow should not be given anything to eat or drink. Instead, they need a shot of glucagon. If you are at risk of very low blood sugar, your health care provider will give you a prescription for glucagon. It is important to always carry your glucagon with you. You should also teach friends and family how to give you glucagon. If you pass out, someone should also call 911 right away.

[May 2013]