

14 - Hypoglycaemia

Sometimes, when treatments for diabetes, like insulin, are taken during pregnancy, blood glucose levels can drop below the ideal values. In these cases, hypoglycaemia is defined as a blood glucose level equal to or lower than 70 mg/dL.

What are the causes of hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia can be caused by any one or more of the following situations:

- Skipping or delaying a meal
- Eating too little at meal- or snack-times
- Eating too late after an insulin injection
- Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach
- Strenuous or prolonged exercise without having eaten
- Using medicines that increase the risk of hypoglycaemia
- Taking an excessive dose of the medicine (too much insulin or oral glucose-lowering medicines)
- Varying the time of insulin injections or taking of oral glucose-lowering medicine

What are the symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

Symptoms depend on the degree of the hypoglycaemia and, in severe cases, can lead to fainting.

- Mental confusion
- Tremors
- Excessive perspiration
- Sticky skin
- Anxiety/nervousness
- Blurred vision/spots in front of the eyes
- Numbness of the tongue and lips
- Speech difficulties
- Headache
- High heart rate
- Weak legs

Special precautions

Hypoglycaemic episodes can occur without being preceded by any warning signs or symptoms (asymptomatic hypoglycaemia). This makes regular self-monitoring of glucose levels essential for successful management of the diabetes.

It may be appropriate to monitor your blood glucose levels at mealtimes, following the advice of your diabetes team, and in any unusual circumstances, such as unexpected exercise, illness or stress.

What should I do in the event of hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia must be corrected immediately, even if you do not have any symptoms, in order to avoid the risk of fainting, falls, seizures or even coma. Anyone who uses insulin should always carry fruit juice, sugary drinks or sugar sweets with them. Capillary glucose levels should always be checked in the presence of symptoms of hypoglycaemia. If your blood glucose is 70 or lower, the **“rule of 15”** should be applied.

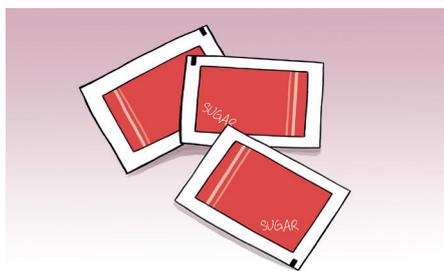
“Rule of 15”

Eat 15 g of simple carbohydrates.

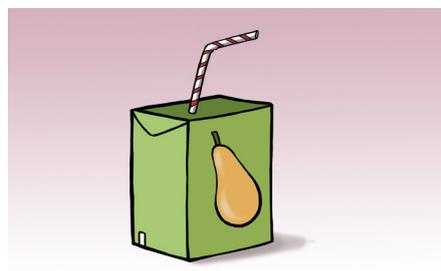
Check your capillary glucose levels again after 15 minutes.

Repeat this procedure until the blood glucose level has risen to 100 mg/dL or over.

Always remember to carry one of the recommended foods or drinks with you for use in the event of hypoglycaemia.



3 sachets of sugar



100-150 mL of fruit juice



3-4 jelly sweets