

6 - Hypoglycaemia

When taking medication for diabetes, like insulin, blood glucose values can sometimes drop below the ideal values (70 mg/dL or lower).

What causes hypos?

- Eating too little for the amount of insulin administered for the meal
- Leaving too much time between the insulin injection and the meal
- Drinking spirits
- Strenuous or prolonged exercise without eating
- Taking medicines that increase the risk of hypoglycaemia
- Taking too much insulin or glucose-lowering medicines

What are the symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

- Hunger
- Tremors
- Profuse sweating
- Anxiety/nervousness
- Blurred vision/seeing spots
- Numb lips and tongue
- Increased heart rate
- Headache
- Speech difficulties
- Mental confusion
- Weak legs

Special precautions

Hypos can also occur without warning signs or symptoms (asymptomatic hypoglycaemia). This is why effective diabetes management requires regular blood glucose self-monitoring, particularly at mealtimes and in unusual circumstances, such as unexpected exercise, illness or stress.



What should I do if my blood glucose is low?

Hypoglycaemia must be corrected immediately, even when there are no symptoms, to avoid the risk of fainting, falls, seizures or even coma. Anyone who uses insulin must always carry fruit juice, soft drinks containing sugar or sugary sweets with them. A finger-stick glucose test should be done whenever symptoms consistent with hypoglycaemia occur. If your blood glucose value is 70 or less, apply the **15-15 rule**

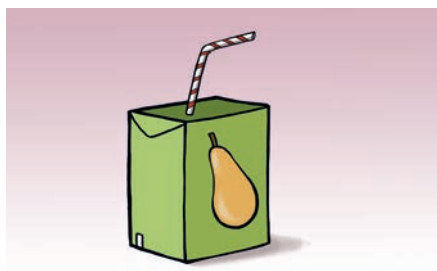
The “15-15 rule”

Eat 15 grams of simple carbohydrates (see figures below), then do another capillary blood glucose test 15 minutes later. Repeat the procedure until your blood glucose value has reached 100 mg/dL or higher. Remember to always carry one of the recommended foods with you for use in the event of a hypo.

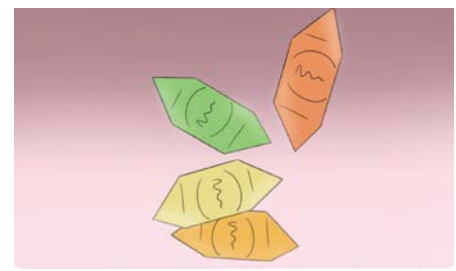
Where to find 15 grams of carbohydrate



3 sachets of sugar



100-150 mL of fruit juice



3-4 fondant sugar sweets

N.B. Chocolate and ice cream should not be used because they are absorbed too slowly to correct hypoglycaemia