

# Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

### What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia occurs when a person's blood sugar level is too low. It can be a serious condition for people who have diabetes. If you are taking certain medications, you are at risk of hypoglycemia. Ask your health-care provider if you are taking one of these medications. Make sure you understand how to prevent, detect and properly manage hypoglycemia.

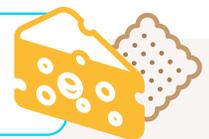
### What are the signs of hypoglycemia?

Early signs of hypoglycemia include:

- sweating
- hunger
- nausea
- shakiness
- heart palpitations (heavy, fast heartbeats)
- anxiety
- feeling irritable
- mood or behaviour changes
- numb lips or tongue
- headache

## TIPS TO MANAGE HYPOGLYCEMIA

**Always carry a source of fast sugar** (such as glucose tablets) and a snack (such as crackers with cheese or peanut butter).



**At the first sign(s) of low blood sugar**, check your blood glucose value. If less than 4 mmol/L, eat one of the following items that contain 15 grams of fast sugar (carbohydrate) right away:

- 4 Dex4 glucose tablets
- 6 Life Savers candies (chewed)
- 1 tablespoon of honey, or 1 tablespoon (15 mL) or 3 packets of sugar dissolved in water
- 3/4 cup (6 oz; 180 mL) juice or regular soft drink



**Think '15-15-15' to treat hypoglycemia;** treat with 15 grams of fast sugar, wait 15 minutes and then retest your blood glucose. If your blood glucose is still less than 4 mmol/L, take 1 of the items containing 15 grams of fast sugar again (listed on the left). Eat your next meal at the regular time. If your next mealtime is more than 1 hour away, eat a snack with 15 grams of carbohydrate and 1 source of protein to prevent the return of hypoglycemia.



**If the hypoglycemia is severe** (you need help from another person), eat 20 grams of carbohydrate (for example 5 glucose tablets or 4 packets of sugar). Wait 15 minutes and then retest your blood glucose. If your blood glucose is still less than 4 mmol/L, take 15 grams of carbohydrate.



If you are having hypoglycemia and **are unconscious or not able to swallow**, caregivers or support persons should get medical attention for you as soon as possible. Your diabetes health-care team should also be told about the event.



If you are taking the **medication acarbose (Prandase/GlucoBay)** and have hypoglycemia, you must take glucose tablets, milk or honey. Acarbose prevents other sugars, such as sugars from juices, from being quickly absorbed.



For those at risk of severe hypoglycemia, **support persons should be taught how to administer glucagon** by injection or into the nose.



**It is important not to overtreat hypoglycemia.** This can lead to high blood glucose and weight gain. Fifteen grams of glucose will raise blood sugar by 2 mmol/L within 20 minutes.



**Avoid driving immediately** following hypoglycemia. Be aware of provincial driving regulations regarding hypoglycemia.

**Wear a MedicAlert bracelet** or other diabetes identification at all times, particularly if you don't recognize the early signs of hypoglycemia easily.

