

Hypoglycaemia – Treatment and Prevention

Hypoglycaemia, or 'hypo', means a low blood glucose of less than 4mmol/L.

'4 is the floor'

Hypo can happen as a side effect of some diabetes medicine such as insulin injections and some tablets.

Always check with your GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or diabetes team what diabetes medicines you are taking and if any put you at risk of a hypo.

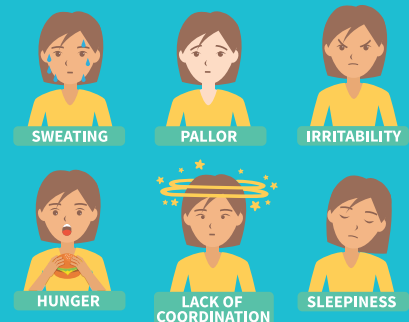
Not everyone with Type 2 diabetes is at risk – ASK about your risk.

Possible causes of a "hypo"?

- Taking too much insulin or diabetes tablets, or taking them at the wrong times
- Eating too little carbohydrate food, missing or delaying a meal or snack
- Doing more physical activity than usual
- Drinking alcohol, especially without eating
- Hot weather

Warning signs and symptoms

- Warning signs or symptoms of a "hypo" may vary between people. They can include weakness, sweating, tingling of lips and tongue, tiredness/sleepiness, hunger, shaking/trembling, dizziness, blurring of vision, headache, difficulty concentrating and irritability.
- **It is important to know your own hypo signs.**



Occasionally a 'hypo' can happen without any symptoms, but it still needs to be treated.

Remember some of these symptoms also happen when you have high blood glucose levels. So **ideally you should test your blood glucose to confirm if you are "having a hypo"**.



What to do if you have a 'hypo'

If you think you are hypo, CHECK your blood glucose with your blood glucose meter.

If it is below 4 treat it with 15g of fast acting carbohydrate.

If you do not feel able to check your blood glucose, take 15g of fast acting carbohydrate immediately.

Step 1 - TREAT the 'hypo' with 15 grams of carbohydrate

Examples of 15g fast acting carbohydrate are:

5 glucose or dextrose sweets such as 'Dextro Energy' or 'Lucozade Energy' or 'Lift' tablets (available from your pharmacy).

170mls of Lucozade Original

Lift Glucose Juice Shot (60ml)
(previously 'Glucojuice')

Please note that 1 glucose tube, for example 'Glucogel', has 10g of carbohydrate.

If glucose is not available, other options include:

- 150ml fruit juice or 1 glass
- 1 glass of a fizzy drink (not diet). ([△ Check the carbohydrate content](#))
- 3 teaspoons of sugar (for example dissolve in hot water or tea)

High fat foods such as chocolate and biscuits are not as fast acting as those listed above.



It is important to ALWAYS CHECK the amount of carbohydrate (sugar or glucose) in whichever product you use to treat a hypo. The amount in different fizzy drinks, glucose tablets or gels may change over time. Check the amount needed to give you 15g of carbohydrate.

Step 2 – Retest your blood glucose after 15 minutes

If still below 4 repeat the treatment by taking a further 15g of fast acting carbohydrate, even if the symptoms have improved.

If your blood glucose is over 4 have a carbohydrate snack if you are not due to eat for a few hours. For example a piece of fruit, some plain biscuits or a slice of bread. Alternatively have the next meal earlier and include some carbohydrate.

Step 3 – Try to figure out why the 'hypo' occurred and discuss it with your diabetes care team

Take a moment to consider **when and why** the 'hypo' occurred - this can help you to prevent it happening in future. If you are having hypos regularly make an appointment to discuss with your GP.