

# Hypoglycaemia

Low blood glucose or hypoglycaemia (hypo) is when your blood glucose levels have fallen low enough that you need to take action to bring them back to your target range. This is usually when your blood glucose is less than 4 mmol/l. However, this can differ for each individual so talk to your diabetes care team about your own blood glucose targets, and what level is too low for you.

## Hypo symptoms

- Unsettled / feeling 'off'
- Hungry
- Sweating
- Dizzy
- Shaking
- Irritable
- Confused
- Cold
- Faint

## Night time hypos

- Morning headache
- Poor sleep
- Tiredness
- Vivid dreams or nightmares
- Night sweats

## What causes hypos?

Hypos can have a number of causes. If your diabetes is being treated by insulin or tablets called sulphonylureas (ask your pharmacist), you might experience a hypo because of:

- Taking too much insulin
- Delayed or missed meals
- Not eating enough food containing carbohydrate (eg. bread, pasta, cereals)
- Alcohol
- Exercising more than usual
- Hot weather
- Breastfeeding
- Recreational drugs

# How to treat a day or night-time hypo

- Do not delay in treating your hypo. Ask for help as soon as you can if you need it.
- Take some sugary food or drink as quickly as possible if you are conscious and can safely swallow. Try to take 15g of fast acting carbohydrate (unless instructed otherwise).  
The following are good options to treat a mild hypo:
  - 5 glucose tablets
  - 170mls of Lucozade\* original
  - 150mls of fruit juice
  - 150mls of a sugary fizzy drink (eg. full sugar cola or lemonade). Always check the label for sugar content!
- Re-check your blood glucose levels after 10–15 minutes and re-treat as above if your blood glucose levels are still less than 4.0 mmol/l. If you are starting to feel better, eat your meal if due or have a small carbohydrate snack e.g. sandwich, fruit.
- If you wake up and believe you have had a night-time hypo, the best way to confirm this is to check your blood glucose levels. If you are having a hypo, then treat it as described above.
- Talk to your family and friends in advance about what could happen if your blood sugar goes low and in particular how they can help you if you have a severe hypo. If you have a severe hypo and are unconscious those around you will need to do the following:
  - Do not give you anything by mouth as you may choke.
  - Place you in the recovery position.
  - Inject you with glucagon which will temporarily raise your blood glucose levels.
  - If glucagon is not available call 112/999 immediately (112 is the emergency number for Europe. Please consult local authorities if residing outside Europe).
- For full information about managing and avoiding day and night-time hypos, talk to your doctor or nurse at your next appointment.

