Diabetic Emergency

FIRST AID FACT SHEET

How to respond to a diabetic emergency

Diabetes is a condition where the body cannot maintain healthy levels of glucose, resulting in too much glucose in the blood. Glucose is a form of sugar which is the main source of energy for our bodies. Diabetic emergencies are when blood sugar levels become either too high or too low.

What to do

1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan (https://stjohnwa.com.au/online-resources/first-aid-information-and-resources/drsabcd-action-plan)

Conscious casualty

Low blood glucose (hypoglycaemia)

1. Help casualty into a comfortable position and reassure them.
2. Give sugar such as glucose tablets, jellybeans or a sweet drink (such as a soft drink or cordial).
   DO NOT give diet soft drinks or sugar-free cordials.
3. If the person is able to follow simple commands and swallow safely, administer 15-20 grams glucose tablets (4 - 5 x 4 gram glucose tablets).
   If symptoms or signs persist after 10 to15 minutes, and the person is still able to follow simple commands and swallow safely, administer a further 4 x 4g glucose.
4. Follow up with a sandwich or other food.
5. If there is no improvement call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.

High blood glucose (hyperglycaemia)

1. Follow Diabetes Management Plan (https://www.diabeteswa.com.au/professionals/training/diabetes-awareness-in-schools-2/diabetes-action-and-management-plans/)
2. If the person has no management plan, seek medical assistance

Unconscious casualty

1. Call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.

2. Place the casualty into the recovery position if unconscious and not breathing normally.
3. Give nothing by mouth.

Signs and symptoms

Low blood glucose

Hungry
Pale, sweaty.
Weak or shaky.
May appear confused, irritable or aggressive
Seizures.

High blood glucose

Excessive thirst.
Frequent urination.
Hot, dry skin.
Feeling tired, blurred vision.
Fruity sweet smell of acetone on the breath.

Caused by

Low blood glucose (Hypoglycaemia) – low blood glucose.
High blood glucose (Hyperglycaemia) – high blood glucose.