

## *Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)*

What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia is a condition characterized by a glucose (blood sugar) level that is too low to effectively fuel the body's blood cells. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the body. According to the National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), the good range of blood sugar is approximately 60 to 120 mg/dL (milligrams of glucose per deciliter of blood). Blood sugar levels under 60 mg/dL are too low and are considered unhealthy.

Hypoglycemia may be a condition by itself, or may be a complication of diabetes or another disorder. It is most often seen as a complication of diabetes, which is sometimes referred to as insulin reaction.

What causes hypoglycemia?

Causes of hypoglycemia in people with diabetes may include the following:

too much medication

a missed meal

a delayed meal

too little food eaten as compared to the amount of insulin taken

Other causes of hypoglycemia are rare, but may occur in early pregnancy, after strenuous exercise, or during prolonged fasting. Hypoglycemia may also result from taking certain medications, abusing alcohol, or other rare causes.

What are the symptoms of hypoglycemia?

The following are the most common symptoms of hypoglycemia. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. The symptoms include:

shakiness

dizziness

sweating

hunger

headache

irritability

pale skin color

sudden moodiness or behavior changes, such as crying for no apparent reason

clumsy or jerky movements

difficulty paying attention, or confusion

tingling sensations around the mouth

The symptoms of hypoglycemia may resemble other conditions or medical problems. Always consult your physician for a diagnosis.

How is hypoglycemia diagnosed?

In addition to a complete medical history and physician examination, certain blood tests are used to diagnose hypoglycemia.

When a person with diabetes has symptoms of hypoglycemia, then the cause is usually diagnosed as a complication of diabetes, or insulin reaction. It is often the result of the causes listed above.

For those who have symptoms of hypoglycemia and do not have diabetes, the disorder is diagnosed by:

measuring blood glucose levels while the person is experiencing the symptoms.

observing that the symptoms are relieved when the person eats food with a high content of sugar.

Laboratory tests to measure insulin production may also be performed.

Treatment for hypoglycemia:

Specific treatment for hypoglycemia will be determined by your physician based on:

your age, overall health, and medical history

extent of the condition

your tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies

expectations for the course of the condition

your opinion or preference

For persons with diabetes, the goal of treatment is to maintain a blood sugar level that is appropriate for each individual. This involves testing blood sugar often, learning to recognize the oncoming symptoms, and treating the condition quickly, based on prior instructions from the physician.

To treat low blood sugar immediately, you should eat or drink something that has sugar in it, such as orange juice, milk, or a hard candy.

For people who do not have diabetes, treatment (as directed by a physician) may include:

avoiding foods high in carbohydrates

eating smaller meals more frequently

frequent snacks

eating a variety of healthy foods

regular exercise