

Hypoglycemia

Information for patients and families

What is hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)?

- A blood sugar less than 4 mmol/L
- Symptoms of a low blood sugar

What are the symptoms of low blood sugar?

- Sweating
- Tingling
- Shaking
- Dizziness
- Hunger
- Palpitations (rapid or irregular heart beat)
- Weakness
- Headache
- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty speaking
- Loss of consciousness

What causes low blood sugar?

- Too much diabetes medications or insulin
- Missed or delayed meals
- Eating less than normal
- Increased or unexpected activity
- Alcohol



It is a good idea to wear identification (such as Medic Alert®), saying that you have diabetes. This will help you get the right help in an emergency situation.

Step 1

- Test your blood sugar (If you have symptoms but cannot test at that time, be safe and treat it as a low blood sugar)

Step 2

Treat with a source of fast acting sugar like:	If blood sugar is 3 to 4 mmol/L, take 15g of sugar	If blood sugar is less than 3 mmol/L, take 20g of sugar
Glucose tablets	4 glucose tablets	5 glucose tablets
Sugar	3 to 4 teaspoons dissolved in water	4 to 5 teaspoons dissolved in water
Juice or regular pop	175 ml (3/4 cup) juice or regular pop	250 ml (1cup) juice or regular pop
Life Savers	6 Life Savers (chew)	8 Life Savers (chew)
Honey/Syrup	3 to 4 teaspoons	4 to 5 teaspoons

Step 3

- Wait 15 minutes. Test your blood sugar again.
- Repeat Step 2 until your blood sugar comes back above 4 mmol/L

Step 4

- Eat your meal or have a snack if your meal is more than 1 hour away.
- If you take insulin and your last dose was **less than 4 hours ago**, you may still have active insulin in your body (also known as “insulin on board”). You will need to eat extra carbohydrate to balance the insulin on board.

After

Think about what may have caused the low blood sugar. Think about things you could do differently to prevent it from happening again. If you have two to three low blood sugars a week, see your doctor or diabetes educator.

St. Michael's cares about your health. For reliable health information, visit our Patient and Family Learning Centre, Room 6-004, 6th floor, Cardinal Carter Wing, or find us online at www.stmichaelshospital.com/learn

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions.