

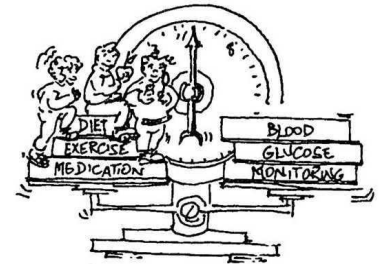
Troubleshooting

Aims of diabetes treatment

Understanding hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose) and hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose) is an important aspect of your self care.

The aim of diabetes treatment is to keep the blood glucose levels as near to normal as possible. Fasting and before meals target is 4-6mmol/L. People with diabetes balance their food, insulin or tablets and exercise, to achieve blood glucose targets.

Sometimes blood glucose levels can go out of a healthy balance.



Too Low

When blood glucose levels are too low this is called **hypoglycaemia**. (Hypoglycaemia only occurs in people who take insulin or particular types of diabetes tablets). It is important to know if you are at risk. Ask your doctor or diabetes educator.

Too High

When levels are too high this is called **hyperglycaemia**. Hyperglycaemia can occur in any person with diabetes.

Hypoglycaemia

Hypoglycaemia has low blood glucose levels – usually below 4mmol/L.

Symptoms

Symptoms can progress from hunger, sweating, weakness, trembling, headache, dizziness, tingling sensation of mouth and lips, to:

- > confusion
- > behaviour changes
- > unsteadiness
- > unconsciousness
- > coma.

Onset

Rapid (minutes).

Causes

- > Too much insulin
- > Too little food
- > Delayed or missed meals or snacks
- > Increased exercise
- > Excessive alcohol
- > Some medications.

If you suspect low blood glucose or feel any of the symptoms test blood glucose levels. If under 4mmol/L treat immediately.



Treatment

- > Eat some glucose-based food or drink such as 5-6 jelly beans, glucose tablets or 150ml soft drink (not diet).
- > Check blood glucose in 10 minutes if blood glucose still below 4mmol/L repeat step 1.
- > Once blood glucose is 4 or above eat some carbohydrate food such as a sandwich, fruit or biscuits.
- > Nothing by mouth if unconscious – call an ambulance or doctor immediately.
- > Check blood glucose 2-4 hourly for 12 hours to prevent repeat hypo episodes.

Notes

Tell your friends, family and work mates that they should never put anything in your mouth if you become unconscious – they should call an ambulance and position you on your side.

- > Always carry some food containing glucose.
- > Wear medical alerting identification.
- > Find and correct the cause so you can prevent a future occurrence.
- > If you experience a severe hypo (you need help from someone else) or 3 minor hypos in a week, contact your doctor to discuss medication or insulin adjustment.

Note for type 1 diabetes

People with type 1 diabetes and those who do not get symptoms (hypoglycaemic unawareness) should test blood glucose before situations where hypoglycaemia may be dangerous (e.g. driving).

Hyperglycaemia

High blood glucose (above 15mmol/L).

Symptoms

Symptoms are thirst, tiredness, lack of energy, passing lots of urine, especially at night, weight loss, blurred vision. In very severe cases, this may progress to drowsiness or coma.

Onset

- > Type 1 diabetes (hours to days)
- > Type 2 diabetes (days to weeks)

Causes

- > Not enough medication (tablets or insulin)
- > Changes in food
- > Illness, infection or injury

Treatment

- > Check you are having the correct insulin or medication.
- > Contact your doctor for assessment and treatment of infection, injury or illness.
- > Review of diet may be needed.

Notes

- > Wear medical alerting identification.
- > Repeated hyperglycaemia of 15mmol/L or more will require assessment by your doctor to review your medication (insulin or tablets).
- > If you are unwell (fever, infection, vomiting) and your blood glucose is high – contact your doctor.
- > If you are unsure of what to do when you are unwell, you should contact your doctor or diabetes educator to discuss an action plan.

Sick days

Infection, fever, vomiting or general illness can cause blood glucose to rise or fall even if you are not eating.

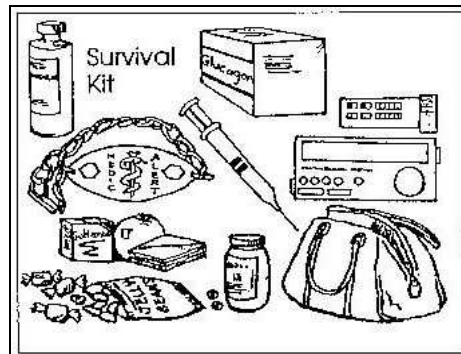
- > Tell someone – a relative or friend, you are unwell.
- > Test and record your blood glucose often e.g. 2-4 hourly. Contact your doctor if too low or too high.
- > If you have type 1 diabetes, test and record ketones 2-4 hourly.
- > Continue taking medication even if not eating. (Those on insulin may need to increase the dose – discuss this with your doctor).
- > Maintain fluid intake (1/2 to 1 cup per hour).
- > Try eating small frequent meals (carbohydrate drinks can replace meals).
- > If vomiting contact your doctor immediately.

Note for type 1 diabetes

- > Blood glucose levels may swing quickly.
- > High ketone may occur with illness.
- > Test for ketones if blood glucose is over 15mmol/L and you are unwell.
- > You may need an extra quick acting injection (Actrapid, Humalog, Humulin-R, Novorapid).

Survival kit

- > Glucose (jelly beans, glucose tablets, glucose drink).
- > Carbohydrate snacks (crackers, dried fruit, non-diet drink.) Your diabetes educator can help with substitute foods.
- > Blood glucose meter, strips, finger pricker, tissues / cotton wool, spare batteries.
- > Your usual tablets or insulin. If using an insulin pen include some syringes as back-up.
- > Keep a list of emergency phone numbers: doctors, diabetes education service, hospital, family, etc.
- > Discuss the option of GlucaGen® injection kit with your doctor or diabetes educator. A friend, relative or workmate can be trained to inject GlucoGen® if you have an unconscious hypo.
- > Keep your kit in a safe, cool place – store extra insulin in the fridge.



Note for type 1 diabetes

Your kit should include ketone testing strips and a record book. Check expiry date on ketone sticks every year and replace if expiry date has passed.

Points to remember

- > Have an action plan for low and high blood glucose – your diabetes educator can help. Avoid known causes of hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia.
- > Check blood glucose levels as often as you need to. You need to know what is happening.
- > If you have type 1 diabetes check urine ketones if blood glucose levels are 15mmol/L or higher and you are unwell.
- > Treat symptoms immediately and seek help early rather than later.
- > Wear medical alerting identification.
- > Keep details of a contact person to discuss problems with.

For more information

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