

## Be prepared to handle low blood sugar.

Even when you are doing everything your doctor advises to manage your diabetes, problems can occur. One instance is when your blood sugar dips too low. This condition is called hypoglycemia (high-po-gly-see-me-ah), and anyone who takes medications to control their diabetes may experience this. It's when your insulin and blood sugar become "out of balance."

As you know, your body needs sugar (also called glucose) for energy. For any number of reasons, your blood sugar level can sink too low, which may affect how well you feel or your ability to perform certain functions. Although there are times when you simply can't predict when hypoglycemia will occur, it can be treated quickly, bringing your blood sugar back to normal.

So, it is important for you and those close to you to know what hypoglycemia is, what symptoms to be aware of and how to manage the condition to ensure that it does not get in the way of the things you want to do.

## Know the facts about low blood sugar: Recognizing it. Preventing it. Treating it.

### *What is low blood sugar?*

Low blood sugar is when there is not enough sugar in the blood to allow you to think and function as you usually do. Insulin helps your body use the sugar and keep it at a constant level in your blood. Generally speaking, blood sugar levels between meals are usually between 70 and 130 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). If it falls below 70 mg/dL, hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, can occur.

### *What are the symptoms?*

While signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia can vary from person to person, the most common are:

- Hunger
- Feeling nervous or jittery
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Cold, clammy skin; sweating not caused by exercise
- Numbness or tingling of the fingertips or lips
- Rapid heartbeat
- Headache
- Sudden mood changes or irritability
- Difficulty paying attention or confusion



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**What causes low blood sugar?**

There are a variety of factors that can cause this to happen:

- Delaying or skipping a meal
- Eating too little carbohydrate
- Increasing activity or exercising more than usual
- Taking too much insulin or more medication than needed
- Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach

**How can I prevent it?**

- Do not skip or delay all or part of meals if you take diabetes medication
- Take your prescribed amounts of medication
- Eat a variety of foods including meat, poultry, fish or non-meat sources of protein; starchy foods such as whole-grain bread, rice, and potatoes; fruits; vegetables; and dairy products
- Eat small meals and snacks about every 3 hours
- Avoid alcohol on an empty stomach
- Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise plan, and know the best times to be active

**How will I know if my blood sugar is too low?**

One of the best ways to keep your diabetes in control is to check your blood sugar regularly. Talk with your doctor to develop your plan for checking your blood sugar. The results will tell you if your blood sugar is low and whether you need to treat it.

**Could I have low blood sugar and not even know it?**

Yes. Some people may swing low without ever knowing their blood sugar levels were dropping. It is important to check your blood sugar often, and treat low or dropping sugar levels even if you feel fine.

**How do I treat low blood sugar?**

Always keep foods to treat low blood sugar with you. Use the “treat and repeat” approach. Treat. Then, after 15–20 minutes, check your blood sugar again to make sure that it is no longer too low. If it is still too low, have another serving. Repeat these steps until your blood sugar is at least 70 mg/dL. After you feel better, eat your regular meals and snacks so you can keep your blood sugar in the desired range.



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**Should I carry medical identification?**

Yes. Bracelets or necklaces that carry a medical symbol and the word “diabetes” are available at pharmacies and through mail order. Or carry a diabetes identification card including emergency contact information.

**What should I discuss with my doctor?**

Be sure to tell your doctor if you experienced any episodes of low blood sugar, even if they are infrequent. Your doctor will want to know:

- What your symptoms are, how long they last, when they occur and how often
- Past medical treatments, any current medical conditions, and a list of medications prescribed by all of your doctors
- What and when you eat, and whether you have had recent changes in bowel habits
- Whether you have gained or lost weight recently

Together you can decide if a change in your treatment plan is needed to avoid future bouts of low blood sugar.



**Medicare Part B patients:** Call **1-877-231-5199** and mention reference code **ED06500** to order your diabetes testing supplies.  
**Web site:** [www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes](http://www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes)

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