

HYPOGLYCEMIA

What causes it? And how can I prevent it?

Hypoglycemia, or **low blood sugar**, can happen to anyone who takes insulin or any of the medications listed in the box to the right. If you don't take insulin or any of the medications listed, you have very little chance of having low blood sugar.

Why does low blood sugar occur? When there are too many things lowering blood sugar and not enough raising it, low blood sugar can take place.

It is common for people with diabetes to have low blood sugar once in a while. However, it can be dangerous to have low blood sugar more than a few times a week or to be so low that self-treatment becomes difficult. Frequent or severe lows (when blood sugar dips below 54 mg/dl or when you need the assistance of another person) can be dangerous and lead to accidents, weight gain, poor performance at work or school, loss of consciousness, seizures, and even death.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO TAKE:

- Insulin of any kind
- Glyburide
- Glipizide
- Glimeperide
- Chlorpropamide
- Repaglinide
- Nateglinide
- Combination medications that contain any of these

THINGS THAT CAN RAISE BLOOD SUGAR

- + Simple carbohydrates (sugar)
- + Complex carbohydrates (starch)
- + Stress
- + Infection/illness

THINGS THAT CAN LOWER BLOOD SUGAR

- Insulin & diabetes medications
- Physical activity
- Alcohol
- Nausea/vomiting

EASY TIPS FOR AVOIDING LOW BLOOD SUGAR

Instead of this...

Try this

Delaying a meal	Have a snack such as a handful of crackers or a piece of fruit at your usual meal time to keep you satisfied until you can have your meal.
Skipping a meal entirely	Drink something that has sugar or carbs in it at your usual mealtime, such as milk, juice or regular (non-diet) soda.
Sudden physical activity (remember: housework, yardwork and shopping count)	Plan your activity for after a meal or have a carb-containing snack beforehand, such as a sandwich or a sports drink. Talk to your healthcare provider about reducing your insulin/medication.
Having more than a couple of drinks	After one or two alcoholic drinks, switch to seltzer, diet soda, or non-alcohol beer.
Dealing with illness on your own	Call your healthcare provider for instructions if you vomit or are too nauseous to eat, then work with them to develop strategies for the next time you're sick.
Guessing your carb counts (especially for those who match insulin doses to carb intake)	Check the nutrition facts on the food label. If there is no label, you can usually still find carb counts in online resources, apps or in books.
Taking insulin doses too close together	Try to space your mealtime insulin doses at least three hours apart. If you forget to take your long-acting insulin or travel across time zones, ask your healthcare provider for instructions on when/how much to take.
Not knowing what your blood sugar is	Check your blood sugar regularly and often, or use a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) with the low alert turned on.