



Low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia)

You came to the emergency department because your blood sugar was too low. It has been treated and is now at a safe level. This sheet explains why it happens, how to treat it quickly, and how to stop it happening again.

What is it?

Low blood sugar most often happens in people who take insulin or some diabetes tablets. Causes include missing or delaying a meal, eating less than usual, extra exercise, alcohol, or taking too much diabetes medicine. Early signs are shaking, sweating, hunger, a fast heartbeat and feeling anxious. Later you may become confused, drowsy or behave strangely. Very low sugar can cause fits or loss of consciousness.

Looking after yourself at home

- If you feel signs of low sugar, check your sugar if you can, then take a sugary drink, juice, glucose tablets or sweets straight away.
- Check your sugar again after 15 minutes. If it is still low, take more sugar.
- Once you feel better, eat a snack or meal with starch, such as bread, rice or biscuits.
- Check your blood sugar more often for the next few days, especially before driving and at bedtime.
- Do not drive until your sugar is back to normal and you feel fully well.
- Always carry fast sugar with you, and tell family or friends how to help.
- Do not drink alcohol on an empty stomach.

Medicines

- Keep taking your diabetes medicines as prescribed, unless the emergency doctor told you to change them.
- Do not change your insulin or tablets yourself. Ask your doctor or diabetes team if you had a low sugar.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor, health centre or diabetes team within 1 week to review your medicines.
- If you had low sugar on some diabetes tablets, you may need to be watched longer. Follow what the doctor told you today.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Low sugar that does not improve after taking sugar twice
- Being confused, very drowsy or hard to wake
- A fit (seizure) or passing out — call an ambulance
- Being unable to eat or drink, or vomiting
- Low sugar that keeps coming back over the next day
- New weakness, slurred speech or chest pain



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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