

DIABETES

Checklist for Controlling Low Blood Sugar

People with type 2 diabetes, particularly those on certain medications, may experience low blood sugar, known medically as hypoglycaemia. It is important to understand and recognise symptoms of low blood sugar so you can treat them quickly and avoid more serious complications, such as fainting.

Use this checklist to help you limit the ill-effects of low blood sugar, and talk with your diabetes healthcare team (GP, pharmacist, endocrinologist and diabetes nurse) about how to avoid future experiences.



For further information on diabetes please contact:



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Check your blood sugar as soon as you experience symptoms of low blood sugar, which may include:

- Nervousness or anxiety**
- Shakiness**
- Sweating**
- Tiredness**
- Confusion**
- Hunger**
- Fast heartbeat**

If your blood sugar is 3.9 mmol/l or below, eat or drink something that will raise it quickly. For adults, fifteen grams of a carbohydrate that contains sugar works best, including:

- Five to six sweets such as jelly beans**
- One half-cup fruit juice or regular (not diet) carbonated soft drink**
- One tablespoon sugar, jam or honey**
- Three glucose tablets (available without a prescription at most pharmacies)**

Check your blood sugar 15 minutes after eating or drinking, and if it has not been raised, repeat these steps until your blood sugar is at or above 3.9 mmol/l. If you experience low blood sugar at mealtime, go ahead and eat your meal as you normally would.

It's important to treat low blood sugar right away to avoid more serious complications, such as convulsions (seizures) and loss of consciousness, which would require emergency treatment.

Hypoglycaemia Unawareness

If you have ever experienced a condition called hypoglycaemia unawareness, which occurs when the early warning symptoms of low blood sugar are not experienced before severe symptoms occur, it is especially important to monitor your blood sugar regularly. Carry a blood glucose meter with you at all times so you can easily check your levels when you need to.

This is especially important if you are driving a car or engaging in any potentially hazardous activity.

Hypoglycaemia and Driving

You must always carry your glucose meter and blood glucose strips with you whilst driving and check your blood glucose before driving and every two hours whilst you are driving. If your blood glucose is 5.0mmol/l or less, or if you feel you may be going hypoglycaemic during the driving period, take a snack. If it is less than 4.0mmol/l or you feel hypoglycaemic, do not drive. Pull over, stop the car as soon as it is safe to do so and remove the keys from the ignition. Leave the driving seat and treat your hypoglycaemia in the usual way. You must not start driving until 45 minutes after blood glucose has returned to normal. It takes up to 45 minutes for the brain to recover fully.

Involve friends and family in your treatment plan, and make sure they know what to do if you experience low blood sugar and are unable to treat yourself.

Always ensure that you carry identification with you.

