

# Low blood sugar (Hypoglycemia)

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## What is low blood sugar?

Low blood sugar is when your blood sugar is less than 4.0 mmol/L. It is also called **hypoglycemia**.

## What happens when your blood sugar is low?

- headache
- blurry eyesight
- hunger
- irritability
- sweating
- dizziness
- fast heartbeat
- shaking
- anxiety
- weakness, feeling tired

If you have one or more of these symptoms, test your blood sugar to see if it is less than 4.0 mmol/L.

If your blood sugar is less than 4.0 mmol/L, you need to treat it right away. If left untreated, your symptoms could get worse and you could pass out.

**If you are not able to test your blood sugar,  
treat your symptoms right away.**

## How do I treat low blood sugar?

### Step 1

- Stop what you are doing.
- Eat or drink 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrate. Choose one of these:
  - 3 to 6 glucose tablets (depending on brand)
  - 3 teaspoons, cubes or packets of table sugar (may be dissolved in water)
  - 3 teaspoons of honey
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup regular pop (not sugar free or diet)
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup fruit juice
  - 3 to 6 candies (depending on brand)

### Step 2

- Sit down and rest for 10 to 15 minutes. Check your blood sugar level again.
- If your blood sugar is still less than 4.0 mmol/L or if the symptoms of low blood sugar do not go away, repeat Step 1.



**If you have a low blood sugar just before a meal or snack, treat it as described in Steps 1 and 2 and then have your regularly planned meal or snack and medication.**

If your next meal is more than one hour away, have a snack with a starch and protein such as:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of milk plus 2 plain cookies
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of milk with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cereal
- 6 crackers with 1 oz cheese
- 1 slice of bread with 1 tablespoon peanut butter or 1 oz meat or cheese

This will help maintain your blood sugar level until your next meal.

## What causes low blood sugar?

- not eating at regular times or missing meals or snacks
- eating less carbohydrates than usual
- doing more exercise or activity than usual
- taking more diabetes medication or insulin than you need
- drinking alcohol

**Talk to your health care provider if you have low blood sugars often.  
Always carry a source of fast-acting carbohydrate with you.**