

Penn State

Institute for Diabetes & Obesity

Many Things Can Make Your Blood Sugar Go Too Low

- Skipping a meal or snack.
- Not eating all of your meal or snack.
- Not eating your meal at the right time. (For example, you take your insulin, but waiting a long time to eat.)
- Exercising harder or longer than usual. (Your blood sugar can drop for a long time after you exercise.)
- Taking too much diabetes medication.
- Not taking your diabetes medication on time.
- Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach.

How Can You Prevent Hypoglycemia?

- Discuss your exercise plans with your doctor or nurse specialist.
- Eat on time; do not skip or delay snacks or meals.
- Be careful when preparing your dose of diabetes medication.

Signs of Low Blood Sugar

If your blood sugar begins to fall too low, you may start to feel strange. You might feel:

- Shaky
- Sweaty
- Light-headed
- Hungry
- Nervous
- Tired
- Angry
- Confused

If you feel this way, do something right away. **What should you do?**

- Test your blood sugar, if you can.
- If you can't test, treat as if you have low blood sugar.
- Treat by eating or drinking something that has 10–15 grams of carbohydrate. Wait 15 minutes, test your blood sugar again, and repeat the treatment if your blood sugar is low.
- If it is more than one hour before your meal, have 1 cup milk or 1 ounce of cheese after you treat your low blood sugar. The protein in this snack will keep your blood sugar up.

Treating Hypoglycemia

The following foods have about 15 grams of carbohydrate. If your blood sugar is low, treat with **ONE** of the following:

- 8 ounces (1 cup) of skim milk or
- 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of fruit juice or
- 4 ounces of a regular (not diet) soft drink or
- 4 teaspoons of granulated sugar or
- 2 tablespoons of raisins or
- 1 tablespoon of honey or syrup or
- 2 or 3 glucose tablets or glucose gel, used according to the label on package or
- 3 pieces of hard candy or
- 6 Life Savers

Recognizing the Symptoms of Nighttime Hypoglycemia

The symptoms of nighttime hypoglycemia can be particularly difficult to recognize. It is also possible to sleep through an episode of low blood sugar, and the next morning have symptoms that you do not recognize. The following may occur if your blood sugar drops during the night:

- Waking up very alert during the night
- Being unable to go to sleep
- Waking up with a fast heart rate
- Damp night clothes, sheets, or pillow
- Unusually high blood sugar before breakfast
- Feeling "foggy headed" (next morning)
- Loss of memory for words or names (next morning)
- Waking up with a headache
- Nightmares or restless sleep