



What is hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose level or hypo) occurs when the blood glucose level drops to less than 4mmol/L or when hypo symptoms are being experienced at a level close to 4mmol/L.

What causes a hypo?

- Being physically active
- Delaying or missing meals or snacks
- Not eating enough carbohydrate
- Having too much insulin

What are the symptoms of a hypo?

- A headache
- Looking pale
- Sweating
- Being irritable
- Trembling
- Feeling hungry
- Crying
- Feeling or acting confused

If in doubt, do not waste time doing a blood glucose test. Blood glucose levels less than 4 mmol/L should be treated even when there are no symptoms.

Treatment

Mild to moderate hypo

If the young person is conscious and has a blood glucose level less than 4 mmol/L, take the following steps.

Step 1

Give any one of the following. You may need to coax the young person to take it:

- 1/3-1/2 can soft drink (not Diet)
- Glucose tablets equivalent to 10-15gms
- 1/3-1/2 glass fruit juice or a small tetrapak
- 2-3 teaspoons honey or sugar
- 5-7 jellybeans

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What is hypoglycaemia continued

Symptoms usually disappear after 10-15 minutes. However, if the blood glucose level remains low and symptoms are still present, repeat the treatment and stay with the young person.

Step 2

Follow up with extra carbohydrate food such as fruit, a sandwich or biscuits. If a hypo occurs just before a scheduled meal or snack, follow with that meal or snack.

Severe hypo

If the young person has a fit or is unconscious, get emergency help fast!

- Do not attempt to give anything by mouth.
- Lie the young person on their side in the recovery/coma position.
- Call the ambulance (Dial 000) OR give an injection of Glucagon* if it is available and you are trained to give it.
- Stay with the young person until help arrives.

* Glucagon is a hormone that raises the blood glucose level and is injected in a similar way to insulin. It is recommended to have Glucagon on hand in case of a severe hypo and be shown how to use it.

References: Caring for Diabetes in Children and Adolescents – A Parent's Manual, Combined Children's Services of NSW, editors G Ambler, V Barron, C May and E Ambler; School Pack, International Diabetes Federation and Diabetes Australia.

For more information phone 1300 136 588

Website: www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

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