Hypoglycemia (or a low) is when glucose levels fall below 70 mg/dl.

What Causes Hypoglycemia?

- Too much insulin (dose mismatch)
- Eating less carbohydrates than planned after insulin dose given
- Not eating scheduled meals and/or snacks (if on fixed insulin doses)
- Illness (usually a stomach bug)
- Certain kinds of exercise

What are the Symptoms of Hypoglycemia?

- Feeling shaky
- Fast heartbeat
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Feeling anxious
- Hunger
- Blurry vision
- Weakness or fatigue
- Headache
- Irritability
- Sometimes people do not feel any symptoms

What Can You Do?

Lows are very serious and you should respond immediately. If a meter reading is under 70 mg/dl, follow the Rule of 15. First, treat by taking 15 grams of **fast-acting** carbohydrates.

Here are some items that contain 15 grams of **fast-acting** carbohydrate:

- 1/2 cup of orange juice
- 3–4 glucose tablets
- 1/3 can regular soda
- 1 dose of glucose gel (in most cases, 1 small tube is one dose)
- 1 tablespoon of honey or syrup
- 1 tablespoon of sugar or 5 small sugar cubes
- 6–8 LifeSavers

Then, wait 15 minutes and recheck. If still low, take another 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrate and recheck again.

Severe Hypoglycemia

Severe hypoglycemia is when glucose levels are so low, you are unable to treat yourself and need assistance from someone else. If left untreated, it may result in seizures, unconsciousness, coma, and even death.

If severe hypoglycemia occurs, a glucagon injection needs to be given immediately to raise glucose levels. If severe hypoglycemia occurs, you'll want to move quickly, so practice the steps of preparing glucagon by using the free Glucagon app, available for both iPhone and Android.

Reviewed by Anastasia Albanese-O'Neill, PhD, APRN, CDCES on 11/26/25

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

Recommended

Treating Hypoglycemia (Lows)

Giving Emergency Glucagon

What is Hyperglycemia?

Understanding A1c

Wearing a Medical Alert

Sources

Low Blood Glucose (Hypoglycemia) — NIDDK

Hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia in type 1 diabetes — PubMed

Glugacon app for iPhone

Glucagon app for Android

The Association of Biochemical Hypoglycemia with the Subsequent Risk of a Severe Hypoglycemic Event: Analysis of the DCCT Data Set