

What is hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia or low blood glucose level (BGL) is a condition which occurs when the BGL falls below 4 mmol/L.

What are the main causes of hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia can be caused by one or a number of events such as

- Delaying or missing a meal
 - Not eating enough carbohydrate
 - Drinking alcohol
 - Too much insulin or diabetes medication
 - Vomiting
 - More strenuous exercise than usual
 - Unplanned physical activity
- Note: Hypoglycaemia may be delayed for up to 12 hours after exercise

What are the symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

Symptoms of hypoglycaemia can vary between individuals. It is important to get to know your body and become aware of the messages your body is sending you.

Common symptoms are

- Weakness, trembling or shaking
- Feeling dizzy/ light headed, headache
- Sweating
- Hunger
- Behaviour changes such as aggression /irritability, tearful/ crying
- Lack of concentration
- Tingling around the lips
- Racing heart beat

What should be done if you feel symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

Test your BGL, if you are able to. If you are unable to do so, treat as a hypo just to be sure.

How is hypoglycaemia treated?

Step 1 (most important)

- Have some quick acting easily absorbed carbohydrate. Six to seven jelly beans or
- Half a can regular soft drink (not diet/ sugar free) or
- Three teaspoons sugar or honey or
- Half a glass fruit juice

If possible re-test BGL after 10 to 15 minutes to ensure it has risen above 4mmol/L. If symptoms persist or BGL remains below 4mmol/L, repeat Step 1.

Step 2

If your next meal is more than 20 minutes away, you will need to eat some longer acting carbohydrate for eg,

- One slice of bread or
- One glass of milk or
- One piece of fruit or
- Two to three pieces of dried apricots, figs or other dried fruit or
- One tub natural low fat yoghurt or
- Six small dry biscuits and cheese