

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.



## Hypoglycemia: The Basics

**Hypoglycemia**, or low blood sugar, is when your blood sugar level reading falls below **4.0mmol/L**.

**When does this happen?**

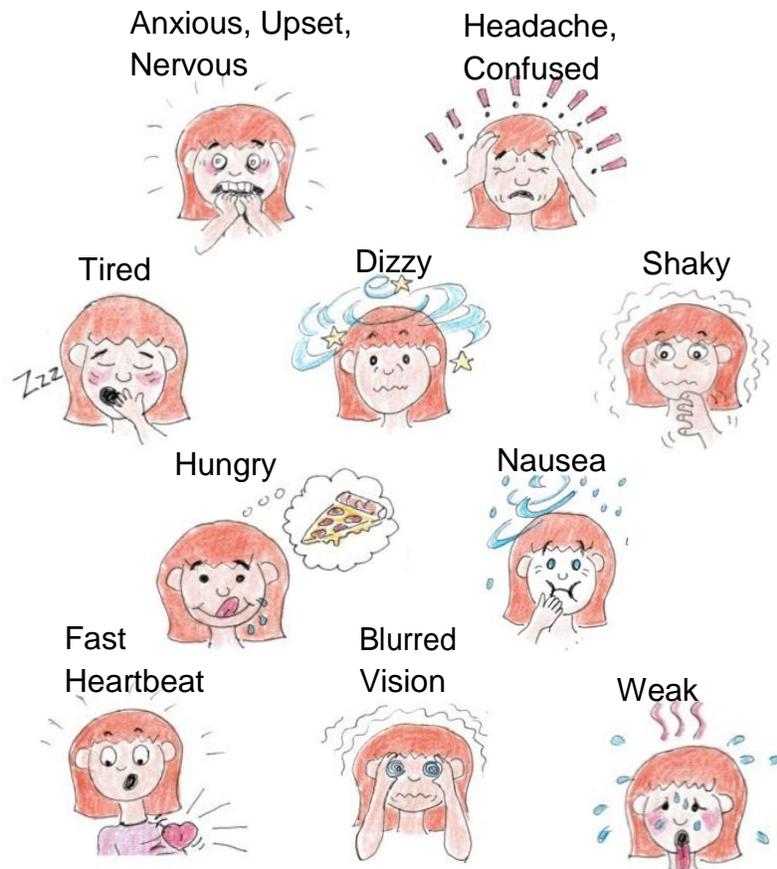
This happens when there's not enough sugar in your body. If you're feeling the signs or symptoms of low blood sugar, you need to **test and treat your blood sugar immediately**. If you can't test your blood sugar and you have any of the symptoms below, treat the symptoms as if you're having a low blood sugar.

**What are the causes?**

Hypoglycemia can be caused by:

- Missing a meal or not eating the whole meal.
- More activity than usual or than expected.
- Not eating when you are sick.
- Eating later than usual.
- Taking too much diabetes medicine or insulin.
- Drinking alcohol.

**What are the symptoms?**



**What is the treatment?**

To treat hypoglycemia, you must take 15 grams of fast-acting sugar (carbohydrate) immediately. Each of the following are examples of 15g of fast-acting sugar:

- 4 dextrose tablets (preferred)
- 3 packets of table sugar dissolved in water
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of apple juice
- 1 tablespoon, or 3 teaspoons, of honey
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of regular sugar pop

**What should be done after the treatment?**

- Wait 15 minutes and test your blood sugar again:
  - If it's still less than 4.0mmol/L, treat it again.
  - If it's more than 4.0mmol/L, you need to eat.
- If your next meal/snack is coming up in the next 45 minutes, eat the meal/snack now.
- If your next meal is going to be in more than 45 minutes, have a balanced snack now.

**Balanced snacks include a carbohydrate and a protein. Examples include:**

- 7 soda crackers + 1 ounce of cheese
- 1 slice of bread + 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$  apple and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup 1% cottage cheese

**What if the treatment for low blood sugar isn't working (severe hypoglycemia)?**

If your blood sugar drops very low, you could pass out (lose consciousness) or have a seizure. This is a **medical emergency**, and you need **another person** to give you sugar, an injection of glucagon, or to call 911.

You need a prescription to get a glucagon kit. Ask your healthcare provider if you should get one and how to use it.