

## Patient Information Leaflet on Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)

**HYPOGLYCEMIA** occurs when your blood sugar level falls below 4.0 mmol/L (70 mg/dl). You may or may not have typical symptoms.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

 <b>Hunger</b>	 <b>Shaking</b>
 <b>Sweating</b>	 <b>Fast heart beat</b>
 <b>Impaired vision</b>	 <b>Dizziness</b>
 <b>Headache</b>	 <b>Irritability</b>
 <b>Weakness</b>	<b>Fits Confusion Drowsiness</b>

Patient information leaflet brought to you by  
Division of Endocrinology  
Department of Dietetics  
Department of Nursing

National University Hospital  
5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074  
Tel: (65) 6779 5555 Fax: (65) 6779 5678  
Website: [www.nuh.com.sg](http://www.nuh.com.sg)

Company Registration Number. 198500843R

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions.

Information is correct at time of printing (April/2015) and subject to revision without prior notice.

Copyright (2015). National University Hospital  
All Rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission in writing from the National University Hospital.

Hypoglycemia can be dangerous if left untreated. Loss of consciousness may occur. **If the person is unconscious, call an ambulance immediately. Do not give the person any food or drink.**

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE HYPOGLYCEMIA?

<p><b>STEP 1: CHECK</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm that your blood sugar level is less than 4 mmol/L.</li> <li>• If you do not have a blood glucose meter, skip to step 2.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 2: TREAT</b></p> 	<p>Take 15g of <b>quick-acting carbohydrate/sugar</b> to raise your blood sugar level quickly. E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 tablespoon (or 3 teaspoons) of sugar or</li> <li>• ½ packet (125ml) of sweetened drink (not the “less sweet” variety) or</li> <li>• ½ can of regular (non-diet) soft drink or</li> <li>• 4 to 7 soft sweets (not sugar-free) or</li> <li>• 3 glucose tablets.</li> </ul> <p>Be prepared; always carry these quick-acting carbohydrates/sugar with you.</p> <p>Avoid taking food that is high in fat such as chocolate bars. Fat slows down the movement of sugar into your blood.</p>
<p><b>STEP 3: RECHECK</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recheck</b> your blood sugar level 15 minutes later.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If blood sugar level is still below 4 mmol/L, repeat Step 2.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• When blood sugar is above 4 mmol/L, take a <b>slow-acting carbohydrate</b>. E.g.:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Your next meal or</li> <li>○ 1 slice of bread or</li> <li>○ 3 pieces of plain crackers or</li> <li>○ 1 cup of low fat milk (250ml).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Record all blood sugar readings and events for your healthcare team to note. Always look for the cause or trigger for the hypoglycaemia.</p>

## HOW TO PREVENT HYPOGLYCEMIA?

COMMON CAUSES	HOW TO PREVENT
<p>Delayed meal or skipping a meal.</p>	<p>Do not delay or skip your meals and discuss with your healthcare team before starting on a fast for religious purposes.</p>
<p>Too little “starchy” carbohydrate food in the meal.</p>	<p>Eat a suitable amount of carbohydrate food at regular meal times.</p> <p>If your appetite is poor (<math>\leq \frac{1}{2}</math> share), supplement your diet with diabetic nutritional supplements such as Glucerna, Isocal or Nutren. You may need to consult your healthcare team regarding a change in the dosage of medications.</p>
<p>Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach</p>	<p>Limit the intake of alcohol. Do not drink alcohol without eating food.</p>
<p>Too much insulin/diabetes medication.</p>	<p>Inject the correct amount of insulin and take the correct dose of diabetes medications at the right time every day.</p>
<p>Mismatch between insulin/diabetes medication and meal times.</p>	<p>If your blood sugar level is often low, you may need to consult your healthcare team regarding a change in your diabetes medication/insulin dose.</p>
<p>Being more active than usual.</p>	<p>Be sensible about exercise. Take a snack before strenuous activities. You may need to consult your doctor about lowering your dose of diabetes medication before planned exercise.</p>
<p>Having a poor appetite from being sick with an infection, such as flu, food poisoning, urinary tract infection.</p>	<p>Get your blood sugar checked as it may be low or even high during an infection. Take a nutritional supplement if you are eating less than half a meal and your blood sugar is not high. See your doctor early.</p>