

Newport Pagnell Medical Centre

Patient information leaflet – HYPOGLYCAEMIA OR LOW BLOOD SUGARS. Sometimes called a HYPO OR REACTION.

Hypos can occur if you are taking tablets,(but not Metformin) insulin or both it is also possible for your blood glucose to fall below normal levelsIf your blood sugars falls too low below 4mmols/l you are at risk of having a hypo

WHAT CAUSES A HYPO?

A hypo can occur quite quickly if you have been busier than normal, done some exercise, taking extra tablets and/or insulin or late with meals.

- Delayed meal or snack
- More exercise than usual, without lowering insulin dose or having an extra snack.
- Not eating enough food e.g. missing meal or snack
- Too many tablets
- Too Much insulin-your dose may need adjusting.
- Stress
- Drinking alcohol without food.
- Following a hot bath or in hot weather (these cause increased blood flow, so insulin is absorbed more quickly.)

People on dietary treatment only do not usually have hypos.

SYMPTOMS OF A HYPO

How to tell if you are having a hypo, look out for the following symptoms:

- Excessive sweating
- Dizziness, faintness
- Paleness
- Headache
- Blurred Vision
- Hunger
- Irritability and short temper
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings
- Difficulty awakening
- Tired trembling, palpitations (irregular heartbeat)
- Pins and needles sensations in the lips, tongues, finger tips, feet
- Slurring of speech
- Double vision
- Drowsiness

Others may notice that you are:

- Pale with glazed eyes
- Confused
- Unable to speak properly
- Uncoordinated (drunk)
- Showing mood changes

If there is a regular pattern of hypos, your insulin or tablet dose may need to be reduced.

HYPOGLYCAEMIA CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE GROUPS

1. **Mild** -you may feel shaky, sweaty, dizzy and recognise the symptoms and correct the hypo yourself
2. **Moderate**- you may be confused and unable to help yourself- another person will need to give you glucose.
3. **Severe**- you lose consciousness and are unable to swallow any food or drink

If these symptoms are not treated then this may lead to unconsciousness

TREATMENT OF HYPOGLYCAEMIA

If you or someone who is with you is not sure if it is a “hypo” TAKE SOME GLUCOSE/ SUGAR- it will not harm you and will act within minutes to raise your blood glucose.

- **IF YOU HAVE A MILD HYPO**

Stop what you are doing and take some sugar that will be quickly absorbed, such as:

- 3-5 Lucozade / Dextrose Tablets
- 3-5 lumps of sugar
- 3-4 Jelly Babies
- 2-3 teaspoons of sugar honey or jam or a sugary drink such as:
- 100-120 ml Lucozade Original
- 250-300ml Lucozade Sport
- 150- 200ml Orange juice
- 150- 200ml Cola (non-diet variety)

Or 2 tubes of Glucogel (formerly known as HypoStop (a thick glucose gel). Put this inside of your cheeks and gently massage them from the outside.

Within a few minutes these will raise your blood glucose levels

- Sit down and wait 5 minutes
- If you don't feel better take more sugar
- When you start to feel better eat your next meal early or have a good snack eat some starchy carbohydrate either as a snack or meal. eg. a sandwich, cereal bar, biscuit, yogurt, chapattis, rice, biscuits, bread or fruit to stop your sugar falling again.

If the hypo happens before a meal or snack, take the sugary drink or tablets and have your meal as soon as possible.

If you do not act on the symptoms quickly enough you may become confused / drowsy and need help to treat hypos. It is important that your family and friends know how to recognise your hypos and act immediately by giving you sugar. If this is not possible they could use the following:

- **GLUCOGEL** (Formerly known as HYPO STOP) FOR MODERATE HYPO'S
If your blood sugar has dropped very quickly (if you missed some warning signs

or did not take sugar quickly enough) then you may need help to treat your hypo.

“Glucogel” formerly known as Hypo Stop a thick glucose gel which is squirted into the side of the mouth. It is quickly absorbed through the lining of the cheek and can easily be administered by a relative or friend. It is available on prescription or can be bought from the chemist.

What to do, Use 2 tubes of Glucogel Hypo Stop. Put this inside of your cheeks and gently massage them from the outside

Glucogel is not available honey or treacle can be squirted between your teeth and cheek (make sure you rub your cheeks) it will raise your blood glucose and when you are able to swallow you should eat a snack or a meal.

N. B. DO NOT USE ON AN UNCONSCIOUS PERSON

- **GLUCAGON FOR SEVERE HYPO**

If a person has a severe hypo and is unconscious, you must not give anything by mouth and if possible should put the person into the recovery position.

Some people who experience severe and unexpected hypos may be prescribed GLUCAGON to be given in an emergency.

If unconscious an injection of GLUCAGON should be given this helps to raise glucose levels by releasing glucose from stores in the liver. It can be obtained free on prescription and your diabetes specialist nurse will show a friend or relative how to give the injection and give advice and training.

The Glucagon injection takes about 15 minutes to work but only raises your blood glucose for a short time, so as soon as you are able, it is extremely important to replace blood glucose by drinking sugary drinks and eating starchy food- see the list above

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE GLUCAGON AT HOME OR IF GLUCAGON DOES NOT HELP CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY OR RING 999 FOR AN AMBULANCE AND PARAMEDICS TO COME OUT