

what is hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose level or hypo) occurs when the blood glucose level drops to less than 4mmol/L or when hypo symptoms are being experienced at a level close to 4mmol/L.

What are the main causes of a hypo?

- Delaying or missing meals or snacks
- Not eating enough carbohydrate
- Being physically active
- Having too much insulin

NOTE: Sometimes a hypo can occur for no obvious reason.

What are the symptoms of a hypo?

- A headache
- Trembling
- Looking pale
- Feeling hungry
- Sweating
- Crying
- Being irritable
- Feeling or acting confused

Treatment

Mild to moderate hypo

If the young person is conscious and has a blood glucose level less than 4mmol/L, take the following steps.

Step 1

Give any one of the following. You may need to coax the young person to take it:

- $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ glass fruit juice or a small tetrapak
- $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ can soft drink (not Diet)
- 2–3 teaspoons honey or sugar
- Glucose tablets equivalent to 10–15 grams
- 5–7 jellybeans

Symptoms usually disappear after 10–15 minutes. However, if the blood glucose level remains low and symptoms are still present, repeat the treatment and stay with the young person.

Continued over...

If in doubt, do not waste time doing a blood glucose test. Blood glucose levels less than 4mmol/L should be treated even when there are no symptoms.



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Step 2

Depending on the child's insulin plan, whether or not they are on an insulin pump, their activity levels and how far away the next meal is, they may need additional carbohydrate such as fruit, a sandwich or biscuits to prevent their blood glucose level dropping again.

Severe hypo

If the young person has a fit or is unconscious, get **emergency help fast!**

- **Do not attempt to give anything by mouth**
- **Lie the young person on their side in the recovery/coma position**
- **Call the ambulance (dial 000) OR give an injection of Glucagon* if it is available and you are trained to give it**
- **Stay with the young person until help arrives**

* Glucagon is a hormone that raises the blood glucose level and is injected into the muscle of the upper arm or the top of the leg. It is recommended to have Glucagon on hand in case of a severe hypo and be shown how to use it by a health professional.

References: *Caring for Diabetes in Children and Adolescents – A Parent's Manual*, Combined Children's Services of NSW, editors G Ambler, V Barron, C May and E Ambler; *School Pack*, International Diabetes Federation and Diabetes Australia.

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