

help with hypos

Novo Nordisk Customer Care
0845 600 5055

Call charges may vary, please check with your service provider.

Calls may be monitored for training purposes.
(Office hours 8.30am - 5.30pm)

For more information on diabetes visit our website
where Novo Nordisk booklets are available
in a downloadable format:

www.changingdiabetes.co.uk

This booklet was provided as a service to patients by:
Novo Nordisk Limited, Broadfield Park, Brighton Road,
Crawley, West Sussex RH11 9RT.



*Soren Lilleore lives in Denmark
and has Type 1 diabetes*



Wood fibre from
sustainable forests



UK/DB/0909/0239

Date of Preparation: September 2009

Further information is available from:
DIABETES UK, TEL: (020) 7424 1000
WWW.DIABETES.ORG.UK

changing diabetes



Novo Nordisk was one of the first companies to introduce insulin to the world more than 80 years ago. Since that time Novo Nordisk has been dedicated to changing diabetes by tackling diabetes in as many ways as possible. We are committed to defeating this disease in our lifetime, we can win, but we can only win together.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for people with diabetes and is designed to help you look after yourself allowing you to lead an enjoyable lifestyle.

It will provide a quick guide to help you recognise when your blood glucose levels are too low and how to take action.

Friends and family will also find this booklet useful as they can help you manage your diabetes.

If you have any further questions or concerns about your diabetes or its treatment, your Doctor or Diabetes Nurse will be happy to help you.

Contents

Questions

Answers

What is a 'hypo'?	Page 1
Why do 'hypos' occur?	Page 1
What can cause a 'hypo'?	Page 2
What does a 'hypo' feel like?	Page 3
Mild hypoglycaemia	Page 4
Moderate hypoglycaemia	Page 6
Severe hypoglycaemia	Page 8
Using glucagon	Page 9
Hypos and driving	Page 11
Checklist	Page 12

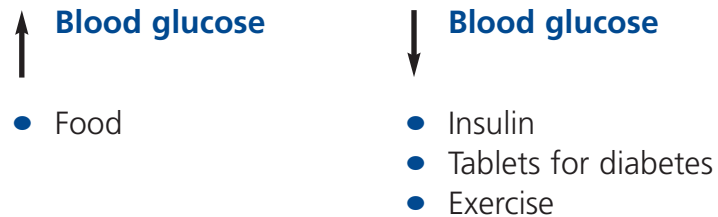
What is a 'hypo'?

- **'Hypo'** is short for **hypoglycaemia**
- Hypoglycaemia is the medical term **for low blood glucose**
- If your blood glucose level falls below 4mmol/l you are at risk of having a 'hypo'

Note: Blood glucose and blood sugar are the same thing

Why do 'hypos' occur?

- Maintaining your blood glucose level is a balance between:
 - The glucose you take in (from food)
 - The glucose you use up by exercising
 - The glucose lowering effect of insulin or tablets



- If blood glucose levels drop too low this can cause a 'hypo'

What can cause a 'hypo'?

'Hypos' can have a number of causes:

- Eating too little or eating less than usual
- Delayed or missed meals/snacks
- Exercising more than usual, e.g.
 - Spring-cleaning the house
 - Digging the garden
 - Dancing at a party
- Too much insulin
- Too many tablets for diabetes
- Alcohol
- Stress or illness
- Hot weather
- Injecting into a muscle instead of the fatty layer under your skin

What does a 'hypo' feel like?

- The way you feel when your blood glucose is low varies from person to person
- You will soon learn to recognise your own early warning signs and how to take action
- For example, you may feel:
 - Sweaty
 - Dizzy
 - Irritable
- 'Hypos' can be divided into three types:
 - Mild
 - Moderate
 - Severe

Mild hypoglycaemia

This is the most common type of 'hypo'.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms may include:

- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Trembling
- Tingling hands, feet, lips or tongue
- Hunger
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Palpitations

If you have any of these symptoms you should do a blood glucose test to check your exact level.

If your level is not below 4mmol/l then you are unlikely to be having a 'hypo'.

If in doubt, take some fast-acting sugar, as described on the next page.

Moderate hypoglycaemia

What is the treatment?

Take:

- Dextrose tablets
- Sugar lumps - 4-6
- Teaspoons of sugar
- Another source of sugar, e.g. a sweet drink (not the diet version) or 200ml of orange juice
- Your doctor or diabetes nurse will advise you on how much to take

When you start feeling better:

- Have a good snack (e.g. 2 plain digestive biscuits or a piece of fruit)

or

- Eat your next meal early

Remember – always carry some form of sugar with you

Note – Do not use chocolate to treat a 'hypo' as the sugar release can be too slow



If you don't treat your mild symptoms quickly, your brain will not have enough glucose to work normally.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Poor concentration
- Poor coordination
- Double vision
- Confusion
- Odd behaviour, e.g. rudeness or aggressive behaviour
- Slurred speech - you may appear to be drunk when you are not

Other people will notice your symptoms but you may not feel ill yourself.

Let your friends and family read this booklet so they will recognise this unusual behaviour and be able to help you.

They should be aware that you may not recognise your symptoms and be reluctant to take the sugar they offer.

What is the treatment?

Take immediate action

Have some sugar (liquid form is the easiest) as quickly as possible, e.g.:

- A sugary drink (not the diet version)
- A tablespoon of sugar dissolved in warm water

Explain to your friends and family that they may have to pour the liquid into your mouth and encourage you to drink it – but only if you are awake (still conscious). For this reason, cold sweet drinks are best.

When you start feeling better:

- Have a good snack (e.g. 2 plain digestive biscuits or a piece of fruit)
or
- Eat your next meal early

In the unlikely event that you pass out (become unconscious), your friends or family should follow the instructions on how to treat severe hypoglycaemia

Severe hypoglycaemia

What is the treatment?

Explain to your friends and family that if you become unconscious they will need to:

- **Immediately call for an ambulance**
- Inject you with glucagon if your doctor has prescribed this and provided instructions on how to use it
- Not give you anything by mouth (as you may choke)

What is glucagon?

- Glucagon occurs naturally in all our bodies
- Glucagon has the opposite effect to insulin. It works by raising blood glucose
- The effect of glucagon only lasts for a short time
- When you are conscious again, you must have sugar to stop the 'hypo' returning

Using glucagon

When you start feeling better:

- When you are conscious, have a sweet drink (not the diet version) to prevent a further 'hypo'
- Continue to have small amounts of sweet drinks until you feel well enough to eat
- Check your blood glucose level – you may need to adjust your insulin dose

If you have recurring 'hypos' – see your doctor or diabetes Specialist Nurse

How do you use glucagon for treating hypoglycaemia?

If you have access to glucagon, regularly check it is not out of date. When the date of use is nearly up, ask your doctor to prescribe you with a new one.

Friends and family may feel unsure about giving you an injection. Let them give you your insulin occasionally, to help them overcome their worries.

Instructions on how to use a glucagon test kit are shown in the product leaflet. Let your friends and family read them so that they are familiar with it.



Hypos and driving

Having a hypo whilst driving could be dangerous for yourself and others

You can avoid hypos by:

- Checking your blood glucose before and during a journey. If this is below 4mmol/l you should not drive
- Do not drive for more than 2 hours without stopping to test your blood glucose level and taking a snack if it is 5mmol/l or less
- Keep dextrose tablets, fruit or a sweet drink (not the diet type) in the car at all times

If you have symptoms of a hypo whilst driving:

- Pull over as soon as it is safe to do so
- Take the keys out of the ignition
- Move out of the driver's seat
- Have a snack or sweet drink
- Do not drive until 45 minutes after blood glucose has returned to normal and you feel fully recovered

Checklist

A few useful tips to help with 'hypos'.

- ✓ Always carry dextrose tablets or sugar
- ✓ Wear a diabetes identification bracelet/necklace or carry a diabetes emergency card
- ✓ Tell friends, relatives and people at work about 'hypos' and how they can help
- ✓ Don't walk or swim long distances alone
- ✓ Avoid driving if you feel hypoglycaemic or your blood glucose is below 4mmol/l
- ✓ Do not miss meals and always take your insulin
- ✓ Test your blood glucose regularly
- ✓ Find out what caused your 'hypo' so you can stop the same thing happening again
- ✓ Visit your doctor regularly to check your diabetes and general health