

## **HAVING A HYPO**

### **WHAT IS HYPOGLYCAEMIA?**

Hypoglycaemia, or 'hypo' is when your blood sugar levels are too LOW (below 4mmols/l).

### **WHAT ARE THE WARNING SYMPTOMS?**

Hypo warnings vary from person to person. However, you will often recognise your own warning signs that indicate the blood sugar level is too low.

#### **YOU may experience:**

- headaches
- shaking or dizziness
- anxiety or bad-temper
- sweating
- palpitations
- hunger
- tingling lips or fingers

#### **OTHERS may notice you becoming:**

- moody
- irritable and aggressive
- irrational
- confused
- unable to concentrate
- unable to co-ordinate (shaking)
- pale
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### **WHAT CAUSES A HYPO?**

1. Too little carbohydrate, missed or late meals/snacks.
2. More exercise than usual e.g. housework, gardening or sport. Remember that you can have a hypo several hours after exercise ("delayed hypo").
3. Alcohol - this may cause you to have a "delayed hypo" the next day
4. A change in injection sites eg from an area of lipohypertrophy ("lumpy skin") to "normal" skin.
5. Too much insulin or tablets, especially if you have lost weight.
6. Hot weather.
7. Occasionally the cause of a hypo may not be obvious. If in doubt, contact your GP, Practice Nurse or one of the Diabetes Team for advice.

**TREATMENT**

**MILD HYPO:**

Stop and treat quickly.

Take the following:	Followed by
<b>QUICK ACTING CARBOHYDRATE</b>	<b>SLOW ACTING CARBOHYDRATE</b>
<p>3 glucose tablets</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>50mls Lucozade</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>150mls ordinary lemonade/coke (<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> glass)</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>5 soft sweets (e.g. Fruit Pastilles)</p>	<p>biscuit</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>sandwich</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>glass of milk</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>fruit</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>your next meal if due</p>
This will raise the blood sugar level quickly.	This will prevent the blood sugar falling again.

If you don't feel better after 5 minutes, take your quick acting sugar again.

**MODERATE HYPO**

If the mild symptoms are not recognized or treated quickly enough you may need help to treat a hypo.

If you are confused or not able to co-ordinate a relative, friend or colleague can give you sugar in liquid form, for example:

- 50mls Lucozade
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> glass sweet fizzy drinks (not diet)

## DARTS Tayside Diabetes Network

Patient Information Leaflets : Having a Hypo

### HYPOSTOP

If you are unable to swallow or unco-operative, you will need someone to help you

1. Hypostop gel can be inserted into your mouth, between your teeth and cheek.
2. The cheek should be massaged on the outside.
3. Hypostop is absorbed from the lining of the mouth. It will raise the blood sugar quickly.
4. It is available on prescription.
5. Hypostop should only be used in people who are confused or semi-conscious but **never** on anyone who is **unconscious**.

When you have recovered and are able to swallow take some 'starchy' carbohydrate i.e. a snack or sandwich, a piece of fruit, biscuit or your next meal if it is due.

### SEVERE HYPO

A very low blood sugar may cause you to become unconscious. You will need help from a friend, relative or colleague to treat this.

Instructions on treating a severe hypo:

1. Place the person in the recovery position and give *GLUCAGEN*<sup>TM</sup> or *Glucagon* I.M. *Glucagon* is a hormone that occurs naturally in all our bodies. It raises the blood sugar by releasing glucose that is stored in the liver. It is available on prescription.  
*Glucagon* takes about 10 - 15 minutes to work. It may not work if the hypo has been caused by too much alcohol. It may cause nausea or vomiting afterwards.
2. If there is no response after 15 minutes your friends or family should contact your G.P. or dial 999 as you may need to have an injection of glucose.
3. Once you have recovered and can swallow take a large snack of 'starchy' carbohydrate e.g. sandwich or your next meal if due.

### **What if I have a hypo when my insulin injection is due?**

If you have a Hypo just before your an insulin injection is due:

1. Take quick acting carbohydrate e.g. 50mls (small glass) of lucozade
2. Once your blood sugar is above 4 mmols, take your normal dose of insulin.
3. Have your meal without delay.
4. Look for the reason for hypo. If there is no obvious reason you may have to reduce the insulin that is working at that time (see adjustment information).

**NEVER MISS OUT ON AN INSULIN INJECTION**

**GENERAL ADVICE**

1. Always carry some form of glucose. e.g. dextrose tablets.
2. Always carry/wear some form of identification specifying you have diabetes.
3. Tell your friends, relatives and colleagues that you have diabetes and let them know how to help if you have a hypo.
4. You may have high blood sugars for several hours after a "hypo"
5. Night sweats and/or morning headache or wakening during night may be symptoms of hypoglycemia during the night.

**THIS GUIDE IS INTENDED FOR USE WHEN YOU ARE WELL.  
DURING ILLNESS, SEE  
SICK DAY RULES FOR PATIENTS ON INSULIN  
OR  
SICK DAY RULES FOR PATIENTS ON TABLETS**

**DIABETES NURSES CONTACT NUMBERS**

(during working day hours only Mon- Fri)

<b>Ninewells Hospital Team</b>	<b>01382 632293</b>
<b>Angus Team</b>	<b>01241 430303</b>
<b>Perth Team</b>	<b>01738 473476</b>