

Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)

During Pregnancy



What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia means low sugar in the blood. During pregnancy, hypoglycemia is any blood sugar less than 70 mg/dl (with or without symptoms present).



What are the symptoms?

Early symptoms may include:

- shakiness
- weakness
- feeling light-headed
- hunger
- irritability
- a rapid heart rate
- headache
- feeling clammy (cold sweat)

Left untreated, hypoglycemia may lead to worse symptoms. These include confused thinking, slurred speech, staggered walking, vision changes, and anger. In severe cases, loss of consciousness can occur.



Causes

- Eating too little
- Taking insulin and then waiting too long to eat afterwards
- Eating too late (skipping or delaying meals or snacks)
- Using too much insulin or certain types of oral diabetes medication
- Exercising more than usual

How to treat hypoglycemia (the Rule of 15)

1. Check your blood sugar and record the result. If you cannot check it, assume it is low and proceed with the treatment.
2. Eat or drink **15 grams of carbohydrate** without added fat.

Examples of 15 grams of carbohydrate:

- 1 cup skim milk
- ½ cup fruit juice (4 ounces) such as apple, orange, or pineapple juice
- ½ can (6 ounces) regular soda (not diet)
- 3-4 glucose tablets
- 1 tube glucose gel
- 16 jelly beans
- 1 tablespoon sugar or honey or regular jam or jelly

3. Recheck your blood sugar **15 minutes** after having the carbohydrate.
 - If blood sugar is still below 70 mg/dl, repeat the treatment above and contact the advice nurse.
 - If blood sugar is above 70 mg/dl, eat a meal or snack containing carb, protein, and fat within 30-60 minutes.

Snack examples:

- ½ meat, cheese, or peanut butter sandwich
- 5 crackers with cheese or peanut butter
- Fruit with a cheese stick
- Cottage cheese and fruit
- 1 cup milk or 6-8 ounces of yogurt

Being prepared

- Make sure to carry a form of carbohydrate with you at all times (in your purse, backpack, car, desk at work, locker, etc.).
- Watch for signs of hypoglycemia, especially if you delay eating; exercise more than normal, or take insulin or other diabetes medication that can cause low blood sugar.
- Teach your family, friends, and co-workers how to recognize and help you treat the symptoms of low blood sugar. They should not give you juice, liquids, or sugar if you're partially conscious, because you may choke. They should call 911 if you are unconscious. *Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the products mentioned. Any brand names listed are for easy identification only.*

If you are not improving with treatment, please call Labor & Delivery, 503-571-2229, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.