

Lows and highs: blood glucose levels

What is **LOW** blood glucose?

When the amount of blood glucose (sugar in your blood) has dropped below your target range (less than 4 mmol/L), it is called low blood glucose or hypoglycemia.

What are the signs of a **LOW** blood glucose level?

You may feel:

- Shaky, light-headed, nauseated
- Nervous, irritable, anxious
- Confused, unable to concentrate
- Hungry
- Your heart rate is faster
- Sweaty, headachy
- Weak, drowsy
- A numbness or tingling in your tongue or lips

Low blood glucose can happen quickly, so it is important to treat it right away. If your blood glucose drops very low, you may need help from another person. Very low blood glucose can make you:

- Confused and disoriented
- Lose consciousness
- Have a seizure

What causes a **LOW** blood glucose level (hypoglycemia)?

Low blood glucose may be caused by:

- More physical activity than usual
- Not eating on time
- Eating less than you should have
- Taking too much medication
- The effects of drinking alcohol

How do I treat **LOW** blood glucose?

If you are experiencing the signs of a low blood glucose level, check your blood glucose immediately. If you don't have your meter with you, treat the symptoms anyway. It is better to be safe.

Eat or drink a fast-acting carbohydrate (15 grams):

- 15 g of glucose in the form of glucose tablets (preferred choice)
- 15 mL (1 tablespoon) or 3 packets of table sugar dissolved in water
- 175 mL ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) of juice or regular soft drink
- 6 LifeSavers® (1 = 2.5 g of carbohydrate)
- 15 mL (1 tablespoon) of honey (do not use for children less than 1 year old)

Wait 10 to 15 minutes, then check your blood glucose again.

If it is still low:

- Treat again
- If your next meal is more than one hour away, or you are going to be active, eat a snack, such as half of a sandwich or cheese and crackers (something with 15 grams of carbohydrate and a protein source)
- Think about why your blood glucose went low and make the necessary changes to avoid low blood glucose again
- Wait 45 – 60 minutes before driving

Make sure you always wear your MedicAlert® identification, and talk to your doctor or diabetes educator about prevention and emergency treatment for severe low blood glucose.

What is **HIGH** blood glucose?

When your fasting blood glucose is at or above 11 mmol/L, you may:

- Be thirsty
- Urinate more often than usual, especially during the night
- Be tired

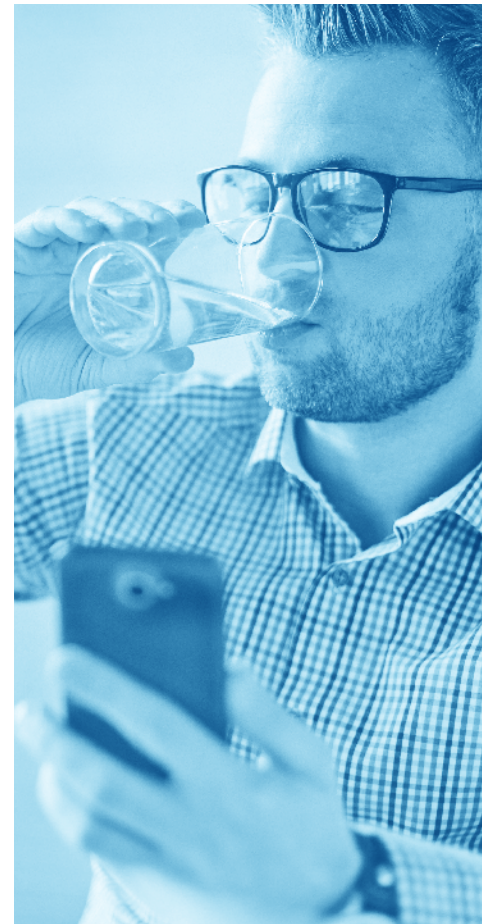
What causes **HIGH** blood glucose (hyperglycemia)?

High blood glucose can result when food, activity and medications are not balanced. High blood glucose may happen when you are sick or under stress.

What do I do if I have **HIGH** blood glucose?

Follow the treatment recommended by your doctor, diabetes educator or other member of your healthcare team. If this happens often, you may need to call or see your doctor to:

- Adjust your meal plan
- Adjust your physical activity
- Adjust your medication and/or insulin



Related article: *Diabetes, Type 1 the basics, Type 2 the basics, and Staying healthy with diabetes*

**DIABETES
CANADA**

diabetes.ca | 1-800 BANTING (226-8464)

Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Eleven million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and, funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

This document reflects the 2013 Canadian Diabetes Association Clinical Practice Guidelines © 2013 The Canadian Diabetes Association. The Canadian Diabetes Association is the registered owner of the name Diabetes Canada. 112024 02/17