

# Hypoglycemia and Advanced Carb Counting

When using advanced carb counting to manage your diabetes, it's important to make sure your blood sugar doesn't drop below 70 mg/dL. Low blood sugar like this is called hypoglycemia. And you should treat it right away.

Your blood sugar can drop below your target range for many reasons, such as from:

Skipping a meal

Exercising more than usual

Or taking more insulin than is needed to cover the carbs in a meal

Your blood sugar can also drop if you take a dose of insulin when your last dose is still in your system. This is called "stacking insulin," and it can be dangerous.

Never take a correction dose while your last dose is still active. And space out your meals and snacks so your insulin doses do not overlap.

Hypoglycemia is serious. When your blood sugar is low, your body doesn't get the energy it needs to function.

It's possible to have hypoglycemia without symptoms. But many people experience symptoms like:

Increased sweating

Headache

Blurry vision

Weakness

A cold sweat or clammy feeling

Shakiness

Hunger

Irritability

Or dizziness

If you have these symptoms, check your blood sugar right away. If your blood sugar is below 54 mg/dL, get medical help immediately.

If your blood sugar is between 54 and 70 mg/dL, use the 15-15 Rule to bring your blood sugar back up to a healthy level.

Eat or drink about 15 grams of a fast-acting carb, wait 15 minutes, and check your blood sugar again.

Foods that have 15 grams of carbohydrate include the following 3 to 4 glucose tablets, hard candy (such as 6 Life Savers), a half cup of fruit juice or regular (not diet) soda, or 1 tablespoon of table sugar.

After eating or drinking the carbs, wait 15 minutes, and check your blood sugar again. If your blood sugar hasn't risen above 70 mg/dL after 15 minutes, repeat these steps.

Do not take insulin to cover these carbs, or you may go low again.

Once your blood sugar is in a safe range, you need to make sure it doesn't drop again in the next few hours.

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If your next meal is scheduled within 30 minutes, eat it right away. Take your bolus insulin for this meal. But if your blood sugar is lower than your target range, do not take your full insulin dose.

Subtract 15 grams of carb from the total before calculating the amount of insulin to take. And you may want to take your insulin after you eat.

If your next meal is more than one hour away, have a snack that has a slower-acting carb and some protein, such as cheese and crackers or half a sandwich. Take a bolus insulin dose with this snack.

Keep track of your low blood sugar readings. And tell your diabetes care team about them at your next visit.

Together you can decide if you need to make changes to your care plan.

If you have frequent or severe episodes of hypoglycemia, tell your diabetes care team right away.

Also wear medical identification, carry a carbohydrate food with you at all times, and check your blood sugar before driving.

Your diabetes care provider may also recommend you keep glucagon on hand.

Glucagon comes in several different forms.

It can be given as a shot using a small syringe or an injector pen. It's also available as a nasal spray.

Understanding how to deal with hypoglycemia is an important part of managing diabetes.

When you have any symptoms of low blood sugar, take steps to treat it right away. And put your pattern management skills to work to help prevent hypoglycemia in the future.