

Type 1 Diabetes in Children: Hypoglycemia

When your child has type 1 diabetes, they need insulin. But with insulin comes a serious but common risk of blood sugar that's too low.

This is called hypoglycemia. It means your child's body doesn't have enough blood sugar, sometimes called blood glucose, in their blood stream to give it the fuel or energy it needs.

Hypoglycemia can be caused by too much insulin, missing a meal, or exercising or playing too hard without eating enough food.

It's important to know the signs of low blood sugar so you can treat it.

Common early signs include nausea; hunger; and feeling nervous, irritable, or feeling dizzy or shaky.

Some young children with diabetes have a hard time recognizing symptoms of low blood sugar.

Others can, but not every time so you'll need to watch your child for the signs and help them learn to listen to their bodies.

To be safe, check your child's blood sugar often with either a finger stick or on their CGM, if they wear one.

When your child's blood sugar level drops below 70 mg/dL, it's important to begin treating low blood sugar.

That's because dangerously low blood sugar levels can develop fast, within minutes. A low blood sugar emergency may cause your child to have a seizure or pass out.

While many adults use 15 grams of carbohydrate, such as a 1 tablespoon of honey or 1/2 cup of juice, children usually need less, so check with your doctor or diabetes educator for the amount that is right for your child.

When your child's blood sugar returns to the target range, give your child a small snack if the next planned meal or snack is more than an hour away.

Being prepared can help your child avoid a low blood sugar emergency.

One way is to keep quick-sugar food handy. This includes glucose tablets, fruit juice, and hard candy.

It's also a good idea to know when to get help. For example, get emergency help if your child's blood sugar stays below 70 mg/dL or your child is getting more sleepy and less alert.

Stay with your child until their blood sugar is above 70 mg/dL or until emergency help arrives.

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Thinking about your child having low blood sugar or becoming hypoglycemic may be stressful, but having a plan and knowing what to do can help.

You know yourself and your child best, so if you have questions or concerns about managing their diabetes and low blood sugar, you can always contact your child's doctor. They are there to help.