**Hypoglycemia** (say: hi-po-gly-SEE-me-uh) is the medical word for low blood sugar level. It needs to be treated right away. Why? Because [glucose](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/word-glucose.html), or sugar, is the body's main fuel source. That means your body — including your brain — needs glucose to work properly.

When blood sugar levels go lower than they're supposed to, you can get very sick. Your parents and your diabetes [health care team](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/diabetes-team.html) will tell you what your blood sugar levels should be and what to do if they get too low.

**The Causes of Low Blood Sugar**

Low blood sugar levels can happen to kids with diabetes because of the medicines they have to take. Kids with diabetes may need a hormone called [insulin](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/word-insulin.html) and/or diabetes pills to help their bodies use the sugar in their blood. These medicines help take the sugar out of the blood and get it into the body's cells, which makes the level of sugar in the blood go down.

But sometimes it's a tricky balancing act, and blood sugar levels can get too low. Kids with diabetes need to keep their blood sugar levels from getting too high or too low. How do they do it? With help from grown-ups, they keep three things in balance:

* [eating](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/meal-plans-diabetes.html)
* [exercising](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sports-diabetes.html)
* [taking medicines](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/medicines-diabetes.html)

Each one of these can affect the other. For instance, eating more might mean a kid needs more insulin. And exercising might create the need for an extra snack. Again, a grown-up can help you learn how to juggle those three activities so you keep feeling good.

Some things that can make low blood sugar levels more likely to happen are:

* skipping meals and snacks
* not eating enough food at a meal or snack
* exercising longer or harder than usual without eating something extra
* getting too much insulin
* not timing the insulin doses properly with meals, snacks, and exercise
* taking a long bath or shower right after an insulin shot

**Signs That Blood Sugar Levels Are Low**

There are a bunch of symptoms that someone with low blood sugar might have. It's not the same for everybody. The symptoms are as minor as feeling hungry and as serious as having seizures or passing out. Have you ever had low blood sugar? If so, do you remember how it felt? Noticing those problems early can help you if it happens again.

**If you have diabetes and you have low blood sugar, you may:**

* feel hungry or have "hunger pains" in your stomach
* feel shaky or like you're trembling
* have a rapid heart rate
* feel sweaty or have cold, clammy skin
* have pale, gray skin color
* have a headache
* feel moody or cranky
* feel sleepy
* feel weak
* feel dizzy
* be unsteady or stagger when walking
* have blurred or double vision
* feel confused
* have seizures
* pass out

If you think your blood sugar level could be low, tell a parent, teacher, or whoever is taking care of you. An adult can help you test your blood and get you treatment so you start feeling better.

**How Are Low Blood Sugar Levels Treated?**

When blood sugar levels are low, the goal is to get them back up quickly. Most kids who have low blood sugar need to:

* eat, drink, or take something that contains sugar that can get into the blood quickly. Your mom or dad may give you really sugary foods or drinks, like regular soda, orange juice, cake frosting, glucose tablets, or glucose gel (a tube of sugary gel)
* wait about 10 minutes to let the sugar work
* recheck their blood sugar levels with a [blood glucose meter](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/word-glucose-meter.html) to see if the levels are back to normal

Sometimes, blood sugar levels can get very low and you might not feel well enough or be awake enough to eat or drink something sugary. When this happens, kids need to get a glucagon shot. **Glucagon** (say: GLOO-kuh-gon) is a hormone that helps get your blood sugar level back to normal very quickly. Your doctor and diabetes health care team can tell you if you need to keep these shots on hand and will help you and your parents understand when it's necessary to use one.

Your parents and other grown-ups who take care of you should know how to give glucagon shots. If you don't have a glucagon shot — or the person you're with doesn't know how to use one — someone should call 911.

**Can You Prevent Low Blood Sugar?**

Hypoglycemia might sound a little scary, so you might wonder if you can avoid it. No matter how well they take care of themselves, kids with diabetes will sometimes have low blood sugar levels. But taking these steps can help:

* Try to eat all your meals and snacks on time and don't skip any.
* Take the right amount of insulin.
* If you exercise longer or harder than usual, have an extra snack.
* Don't take a hot bath or shower right after an insulin shot.
* Stick to your diabetes management plan.

**What else can you do?** Wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace that says you have diabetes. Then, if you are not feeling well, whoever's helping you — even if the person doesn't know you — will know to call for medical help. Medical identification also can include your doctor's phone number or a parent's phone number. The quicker you get help, the quicker you'll be feeling better.

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Date reviewed: September 2016