



# What is hypoglycaemia? (hypo)

Hypoglycaemia occurs when your blood glucose (sugar) level falls too low, usually below 4 mmol/L.

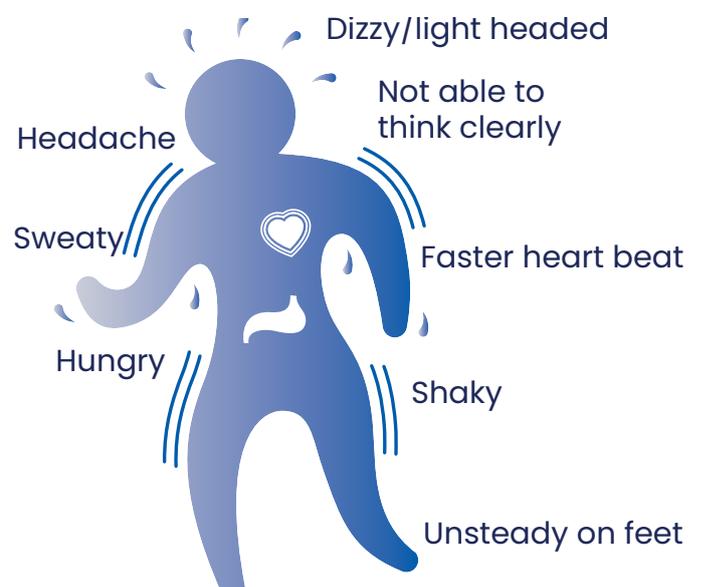
## Signs of a 'hypo'

A hypo can happen when you take some kinds of diabetes tablets or insulin for your diabetes. If your diabetes is managed by diet and exercise and you don't take tablets or insulin, then a hypo isn't going to be a worry.

## What causes a hypo?

A hypo can be caused by a number of things:

- Too much medication or insulin.
- Skipping or delaying meals or snacks.
- Extra or unplanned activity without eating.
- Drinking too much alcohol or drinking alcohol on an empty stomach.
- Not eating enough carbohydrates.



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## How can I prevent a hypo?

There are a number of things you can do to lessen the risk of having a hypo:

- Check your blood glucose level regularly
- Take your medications/insulin as directed
- Don't skip meals
- Limit/avoid alcohol and don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Carry hypo treatment with you
- Include some rice or pasta or potato or damper or bread with each meal.

## How to fix a hypo

If you can, check your blood glucose level. If it is below 4.0 mmol/L or you are having signs you are having a hypo, treat it quickly.

### Step 1 "Treatment"

- 6–7 jelly beans OR
- Half a glass of fruit juice OR
- Half a can regular (not diet) soft drink OR
- 3 teaspoons of sugar or honey.

Wait 10–15 minutes. Check your blood glucose level again to see if it is rising. If it isn't above 4.0 mmol/L and you don't feel better, repeat Step 1

### Step 2

Once your blood glucose level is above 4.0 mmol/L have some longer-acting carbohydrate. This could be your next meal or if this is more than 20 minutes away, eat something like:

- A slice of bread or

- A piece of fruit or
- A glass of milk or
- Six small dry biscuits.

## Treat quickly

It is important to treat a hypo quickly. If it isn't treated it can get worse and cause:

- Slurred speech (people might think you are drunk when you are not)
- Confusion
- Fitting.
- If this occurs call 000 or 112 from mobiles.

**This is an emergency!**

## What if I can't swallow or lose consciousness?

- If you can't swallow or can't be woken, your friends and family should phone for an ambulance (dial 000 or 112 from mobiles).
- It is not safe for you to be given food or drink if you can't swallow or are unconscious.

## What else should you do?

- Make sure your family and friends know about hypos and what to do if you have one
- Look for the reason why you had the hypo
- Always carry your hypo treatment with you
- Wear identification that says you have diabetes
- Test your blood glucose level before driving
- Tell your doctor if you are having lots of hypos (more than a couple a week) or if you have been unconscious because of a hypo.



**"Hands on Country"**

This painting was created for Australian Diabetes Council by artist Chris Tobin, a Dharug man, and a traditional custodian in the Blue Mountains region. In the artist's words: "The central part of this painting represents the relationship of the clan – it's a unity of people looking out for each other while living independent lives."

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