

Hypoglycemia Unawareness



Diabetes Done Right™

Sugar is the body's main source of energy and we need it to survive. In fact, the brain consumes ~20% of the body's sugar. Low blood sugar (*hypoglycemia*) happens when blood sugar is low enough to harm you. Sugar is the brain's favorite food and low levels can lead to a "fight or flight" response or even brain dysfunction.

How low is low

Low blood sugar is usually defined as less than 70 mg/dL, but speak with your healthcare provider about your goal blood sugar range. Hypoglycemia can fit into 3 different categories:

Level 1 (Mild): 54-70 mg/dL

Level 2 (Moderate): Less than 54 mg/dL

Level 3 (Severe): Symptoms so severe that you experience dramatic mental or physical changes that stop you from being able to safely treat yourself. Severe hypoglycemia requires help from another person - usually through glucagon.

What it normally feels like

Low blood sugar can take on any number of different forms. The most common ones include:

- Anxiety, irritability, or nervousness
- Shakiness or tremors
- Confusion, lightheadedness, or dizziness
- Hunger or nausea
- Fast heartbeat
- Sleepiness, weakness, or low energy
- Blurry vision or tingling around the mouth or face
- Headaches
- Worsening coordination
- Seizures

Hypoglycemia is dangerous because it is the brain's favorite food. If blood sugar levels stay low for too long they can affect the way the brain works. This leads to some of the symptoms above like confusion, dizziness, blurry vision, tingling, worsening coordination, seizures or death. This is why hypoglycemia can sometimes resemble a stroke.

High Risk

Some people with hypoglycemia have no symptoms at all. This is called hypoglycemia unawareness and is very dangerous. Hypoglycemia unawareness makes someone less likely to recognize and respond to low blood sugar.



Who gets it

Hypoglycemia unawareness is most common in people with type 1 diabetes who experience frequent low blood sugar or in people who have had uncontrolled diabetes for a long period of time.

How to reset

Fortunately, hypoglycemia unawareness is usually reversible. Avoiding low blood sugar for 1-3 weeks is typically long enough to reset your internal alarm system.

Avoiding low blood sugar involves raising your blood sugar goals to avoid all instances of low blood sugar, including mild hypoglycemia. This might lead to a small raise in your A1c level. The dangers of hypoglycemia unawareness are more significant than the small increase you may see in your A1c.

Resetting your blood sugar targets to regain hypoglycemia awareness should only be done in careful coordination with your healthcare provider.