
Glucose Lowering Medications

Use caution while taking diabetes medications.

All diabetes pills can interact with other medicines. Because of the chance of medication interactions, tell your VA provider about all medicines you are taking. While taking diabetes pills or insulin, check with your provider before starting anything new, even over-the-counter items. To prevent low blood sugar, unless otherwise instructed, always take these medications with food.

Examples of some medications that can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) are listed below. Check with your pharmacist for a complete list.

- Sulfonylureas (Glimepiride, Glyburide, Glipizide)
- Glinides (Repaglinide, Nateglinide)
- Insulin (rapid-acting, short-acting, intermediate-acting and long-acting)

What is low blood sugar?

Blood glucose less than 70 is considered low blood sugar. If you have symptoms of a low blood sugar but you test and it is above 70, you should treat for a low blood sugar. Some symptoms of low blood sugar:

Mild

Shakiness
Sweating
Fast heart beat
Dizziness
Blurred vision
Difficulty thinking
Hunger
Anxiety
Headache
Tiredness

Moderate

Difficulty moving
Confusion
Unusual behavior

Severe

Seizure
Coma
Combative behavior

Causes of low blood sugar:

- Taking too much insulin or medication
- Missing a meal or snack
- Eating less than usual
- Not eating carbohydrate at the meal
- More activity or exercise than usual
- Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach

How to treat a low blood sugar:

- If your blood sugar is low (below 70) **take 15 grams of carbohydrate**. If it becomes very low (below 50) take **30 grams** of carbohydrate.
- Wait 15 minutes then recheck your blood sugar. If it is still below 70, eat another 15 grams of carbohydrate.
- Wait another 15 minutes then recheck your blood sugar again. Once your blood sugar is above 70, if no meal is scheduled within the next hour, eat a snack containing carbohydrate, protein, and fat. Try for example:
 - a half sandwich
 - a glass of 1% or skim milk and 2 graham crackers
 - 6-7 crackers with cheese or peanut butter (prepackaged work well)

Always keep a source of 15 grams of carbohydrate within reach. Carry some in your pocket and in your car. Keep some at your bedside and any place you think you might need it.

Sources of 15 grams of carbohydrate:

- 1 tube of glucose gel
- 3 to 4 glucose tablets
- 3 pieces of hard candy or 6 large jelly beans (not sugar free)
- 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of regular fruit juice, not tomato or vegetable
- 1/2 of a 12-ounce can of regular soda (not diet)

Remember:

- Always carry a source of carbohydrate with you.
- Never drive when your blood sugar is low.
- Call your VA provider if you have repeated low blood sugar readings.
- If you are unable to swallow a quick source of sugar, call 911.