
The 15-15 Rule for the Management of Low Blood Glucose (Sugar)

What is low blood glucose or hypoglycemia?

- **Level 1:** A blood glucose between 54 and 70
- **Level 2:** A blood glucose less than 54
- **Level 3:** No set threshold but associated with severe mental impairment

What are some symptoms of low blood glucose?

- **Level 1:** Shaky, sweaty, fast heartbeat, dizzy, hunger, blurred vision, confused, anxious, headache, weak, and tired.
- **Level 2:** Difficulty moving, confusion, or unusual behavior
- **Level 3:** Seizures, combative behavior, or coma

What can cause low blood glucose?

- Missing a meal or eating less carbohydrates (carbs) than usual
- Changes in or more than usual activity
- Taking too much insulin or medicine
- Drinking alcohol
- Menstrual cycle patterns
- Gastroparesis (slowed emptying of gut)
- Lactation (breast feeding)

How do you treat a level 1 low blood glucose (70 or lower)?

Step 1: Eat or drink 15 grams (g) of “fast” carbs

Step 2: Wait 15 minutes and recheck blood glucose

Step 3: If blood glucose level is still less than 70, repeat steps 1 and 2

How do you treat a level 2 low blood glucose (54 or lower)?

Step 1: Eat or drink 30 grams (g) of “fast” carbs

Step 2: Wait 15 minutes and recheck blood glucose

Step 3: If blood glucose level is still less than 70, repeat steps 1 and 2

How do you treat a level 3 severe low blood glucose?

- Nasal Glucagon
- Glucagon Injection
- Turn patient to the left side to avoid risk of choking with vomiting
- Call 911 or other emergency services depending on location

Examples of 15 grams of “fast” carbs:

- 3-4 glucose tablets*
- ½ -1 tube glucose gel*
- 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice
- 1 Tbsp. corn syrup
- 1 Tbsp. jam, preserves, jelly (not low sugar), honey, or sugar
- 8 ounces of skim or low fat milk

*Ask your pharmacist, dietitian, or diabetes care staff how much equals 15 grams.

**Note: If your blood glucose is less than 54, you need to have 30 grams of “fast” carbs instead of 15 grams. HINT: double the amounts above.

Remember:

- Wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace.
- Always carry a quick source of sugar on your person at all times.
- Check your blood glucose before driving. Never drive when you are low.
- Call your provider if you have two or more low blood glucose levels per week.
- If a person with low glucose becomes non-responsive, someone should give nasal or injection glucagon and contact emergency services or 911.