Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Glucose)

Hypoglycemia occurs when glucose levels drop below the target range.

Target Range:  
- Under age 5: 80 – 180
- Ages 5 and above: 70 – 140

Hypoglycemia can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the signs and symptoms.

If you have mild hypoglycemia, you may feel:
- Shaky
- Weak
- Tired
- Hungry
- Irritable
- Unable to think clearly

Children with moderate hypoglycemia may:
- Look Pale
- Need help treating low blood glucose
- Have difficulty concentrating or following a conversation
- Seem “distant” or confused
- Have poor coordination (legs feel weak, difficulty walking)
- Have slurred speech
- Have difficulty cooperating

Severe hypoglycemia (insulin reaction) occurs when very low glucose levels cause a child to have a seizure or become unresponsive. Insulin reactions are rare; most people with diabetes never experience severe hypoglycemia.

Hypoglycemia can occur:
- When there is extra physical activity without having a snack or decreasing insulin
- If too much insulin is given before a meal
- If meal or snack carbs aren’t eaten after giving rapid acting insulin
- If there is illness, especially with vomiting or diarrhea
- Up to 12 – 24 hours after lots of extra physical activity
- Overnight, if low blood glucoses occurred several times in one day
Treatment of Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Glucose)

If blood glucose is below 70 (or below 80 if under 5 years) with symptoms of mild hypoglycemia, follow the 15/15 RULE

Take 15 grams of carbohydrate, wait 15 minutes, retest BG

If BG is not above 70 (or above 80 if under 5 years), follow the rule again.

15 gram servings of simple carbohydrates:
- 1/2 cup fruit juice (“toddler-size” juice box)
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 5-6 ounces non-caffeine regular soda pop (half can)
- 8 ounces regular sports drink
- 6 - 7 saltines
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 15 Skittles
- 8 Sweet Tarts

Chocolate candy bars are not good choices for treating lows. Fat slows down absorption, and may delay raising the BG.

Once the BG is in the target, check your glucose again in 1 hour. You may need to eat an additional snack if:
- Your next meal or snack is more than 30 minutes away
- You are going to have physical activity
- You are on multiple daily injections and your BG is <110 at bedtime

Follow-up snacks should include about 15 grams of carbohydrate, which also contains fat:
- Peanut butter or cheese crackers
- Milk and graham crackers
- Yogurt
- Half of a cheese or meat sandwich
- Pudding cup

If BG is low with symptoms of moderate hypoglycemia:
- Follow 15/15 RULE if cooperating and able to swallow.
- If unable to swallow, squeeze contents of one tube of cake gel into inner cheek.
  May repeat one time.
- When BG is in target range, give follow up snack.

If blood glucose is low with symptoms of severe hypoglycemia (unconsciousness or seizures):
- Give glucagon as per instructions.
- Do not forget to practice preparing and drawing up the glucagon on expired kits before discarding them. This will help you feel more comfortable using the kit in the event of a true emergency.

March 2008