

# Managing hypoglycaemia (a hypo) when you have chronic kidney disease (CKD)

This information is about how to treat low blood glucose levels, also called a hypo, when you have chronic kidney disease.

## What is this information about?

This information is about how to treat low blood glucose levels, also called a hypo, when you have chronic kidney disease.

## What is a hypo?

A hypo is short for hypoglycaemia. This is when your blood glucose levels drop too low. This is usually below 4mmol/l.

## How do I know if I'm having a hypo?

**Some early signs of a hypo might be:**

- Trembling.
- Becoming pale.
- Feeling anxious.
- Palpitations (when your heart beats very fast or feels as if it is pounding).
- Hunger.
- Tingling lips.
- Becoming sweaty or clammy.

**If this isn't treated, then symptoms may get worse and you may experience the following:**

- Slurring words.
- Behaving out of character.
- Becoming aggressive.
- Becoming tearful.
- Difficulty concentrating or feeling confused.

**At the first signs of a hypo, check your blood glucose levels.**

## What should I do if I have a hypo?

You need to increase your low blood glucose levels as quickly as possible. To do this you need to eat food or drink liquid that is a fast acting carbohydrate. You should always treat a hypo with fast acting carbohydrate, even if you are about to eat.

The following are examples of suitable food or drink to treat hypos. They are also low in potassium.

Food	15g Carbohydrates is found in:	20g Carbohydrates is found in:
Glucose/dextrose tablets	4 to 5 tablets	5 to 7 tablets
Lucozade Energy	170 ml	220 ml
Cola-type fizzy drink (be aware, this is high in phosphate)	150 ml	200 ml
Jelly babies (check packet)	3 to 5 babies	4 to 6 babies
Jelly beans	10 beans	14 beans
Fruit pastilles	6 pastilles	8 pastilles

## How to treat a hypo

### STEP 1:

1. Take 15–20g fast-acting carbohydrate and wait 10 to 15 minutes. Then re-test and, if your blood glucose level has not risen above 4mmol/l, take a further 15–20g fast-acting carbohydrate and test again.
2. Repeat until your blood glucose level is more than 4mmol/l.

### STEP 2:

1. Once your blood glucose levels have recovered, have an extra 10-20g carbohydrate in the form of slower acting carbohydrate, to help prevent your blood glucose from dropping again.

This is particularly important if you tend to have hypos during the night or if you are not planning to eat a meal within the next 30 minutes. You do not need to do this if your next meal is due.

2. Suitable slower acting carbohydrate foods are:

- fruit.
- wholegrain bread.
- cereal.
- yoghurt or milk.
- two or three plain biscuits.

## Should I have insulin too?

No. Do not take insulin to cover the carbohydrates you take to treat a hypo.

## Does the fluid I drink to treat a hypo count towards my fluid allowance?

Yes. If your fluid allowance is very low, choose solid options to treat your hypo.

## Can I eat chocolate or biscuits to treat a hypo?

No. Don't use chocolate or biscuits to treat a hypo since they break down to glucose too slowly.

## Should I eat a lot when I have a hypo?

No. It is tempting to eat a lot when your glucose is low, but this can result in your blood glucose becoming very high. Sticking to your hypo treatment is best.

## Who can I contact if I need further information or advice?

### The Renal Dietitians

You can contact the renal dietitians on:

**Email:** [uhsussex.renal.dietitians@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.renal.dietitians@nhs.net)

**Telephone:** 01273 696955 Ext. 64327

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath

Ref. number: 1098.1  
Publication date: 06/2024  
Review date: 06/2027

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