

Hypoglycemia after Bariatric Surgery

What is hypoglycemia?

- Hypoglycemia means low blood sugar
- After surgery you can get a type of low blood sugar called reactive hypoglycemia. This happens after you eat a meal or a snack that is high in sugar
- You can also get hypoglycemia if you are not eating enough carbohydrates
- Signs, symptoms and treatment are the same regardless of a cause

Even if you did not have diabetes before surgery you may experience hypoglycemia after surgery.

What are the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia?



You may feel one or more of these:

- Hunger
- Dizziness
- Cold and clammy skin
- Weakness or shakiness
- Nervousness
- Feeling confused or anxious
- Nausea

In case of reactive hypoglycemia signs and symptoms may happen 1 to 3 hours after eating. They usually go away after you eat again.

If you think you have hypoglycemia get a blood glucose meter and measure your blood sugars.

If your blood sugar is **below 4 mmol/L**, follow the steps below.



1) Have 15 g of fast acting sugar.

This sugar can be in the form of:

- Glucose tablets, such as Dex 4[®] tablets. Take 4 tablets
- 3/4 cup of juice
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of honey
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) or 5 packets of table sugar dissolved in water

Do **not** eat foods that are high in sugar, like cookies or cake to raise your blood sugar. It is important that you have a controlled amount of fast acting sugars. Trying to raise your blood sugar with cookies or candies can be *unsafe*.

- 2) Wait 15 minutes and check your blood sugar again.
- 3) If it is still below 4 mmol/L, repeat steps 1 and 2 until your blood sugar is above 4 mmol/L.
- 4) Once your blood sugar is above 4 mmol/L or after a treatment your symptoms have gone away, eat a snack containing carbohydrate foods high in fibre and protein. You will find some examples at the bottom of the page.

How can I prevent hypoglycemia?

- Eat 6-8 small healthy meals and snacks
- Eat meals and snacks at 3-4 hours apart
- At each meal and snack include carbohydrate foods **with** protein
- Choose carbohydrates that are high in fibre and low in sugar
- Avoid added sugar, sweets and high sugar foods and drinks
- Avoid drinking and eating at the same time
- Avoid alcohol

What can I have for my snacks?

Pair foods containing high fibre carbohydrates with protein.

Here are some examples:

- Apple **and** peanut butter
- Whole grain crackers **and** cheese
- Yogurt topped **with** fruit **and** bran cereal
- Whole wheat pita bread **and** hummus

