How to handle low blood sugar

If you are a person who has diabetes, the symptoms of low blood sugar can come upon you suddenly. Sometimes people aren't even aware of low blood sugar when they are asleep or involved in an intensely focused activity such as exercise or driving an automobile. Symptoms that you will notice are shakiness, nervousness, dizziness, weakness, and irritability. You may also become drowsy, have blurred vision, or have a headache. Your doctor can help describe what you may feel.

Your health care team has given you specific care instructions. The following are general guidelines to keep in mind in managing low blood sugar:

- Treat low blood sugar immediately. Carry readily available carbohydrates with you. See the suggested list of foods and glucose equivalents. Give the food 10 to 15 minutes to have an effect. If there's no change after that, have some more food. Wait another 15 minutes. Call your doctor if there's no improvement.
- Wear a medical identification tag that shows you have diabetes.
- Prepare for long drives or trips. Do not drive a car for more than 3 hours without eating. Take along food. Take time to pull over and have a snack. Wait 15 minutes before resuming your drive. Drive with a friend.
- Tell you doctor about all the drugs you are taking.
- Use alcohol only in consultation with your doctor. If you do use alcohol, do not drink on an empty stomach. Use water or sugar-free mixers only.

Good sources of carbohydrates to treat low blood sugar

Food	Glucose equivalent (fl oz)
Apple juice (8 oz)	12
Banana (1 large or 2 small)	6.4
Chocolate bar (Hershey, 1.45 oz)	2.5
Cola (nondiet, 12 oz)	13.3
Gelatin (sweetened with sugar)	6.4
Ginger ale (nondiet, 12 oz)	15.5
Kool Aid (sweetened with sugar, 8 oz)	13.4
Life Savers (8 pieces)	—
Orange juice (8 oz)	12
Orange soda (12 oz)	10
Tang (orange flavor, sweetened with sugar, 8 oz)	10

NOTES

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