

# Prevention of low blood sugar

It is more common for diabetics to suffer from low blood sugar levels due to their medication. However, many non diabetics suffer from low blood sugar. As glucose is one of the body's main sources of energy, low glucose levels causes obvious problems.

## Symptoms of low blood sugar

Hypoglycemia is the medical term for a low blood sugar level. Hypoglycaemia can make you feel unwell. The most common symptoms are weakness, shaking, mood swings, anxiety, insomnia, migraine and headaches, paleness, irritability, nausea and fatigue. Hunger is also a feature. Diabetics who fail to get hypoglycaemia treated can suffer from confusion, seizures and can end up in a coma. While non-diabetics are unlikely to get severe hypoglycaemia symptoms such as seizures, it is important to by rectify low blood sugars by adopting good eating habits.

## Top ten tips

### EAT A WELL-BALANCED DIET

It is important to eat fresh vegetables, fruit and wholegrain cereal foods, with lean meat (for protein), small amounts of fat and plenty of water.

### EAT SMALL MEALS, OFTEN

Blood sugar levels can be controlled by making sure that you have small, regular meals. Try not to leave more than three or four hours between your snacks or meals. This eating pattern prevents your blood sugar from dropping too low and prevents you getting too hungry and hence from overeating at meal times. It is much better to space meals out and give your body a chance to digest food well, rather than go for long periods of not eating and eating and then overeating. Having five or six small snacks, rather than three large meals will not cause weight gain as long as the total amount you need to consume does not vary.

### KEEP HEALTHY SNACKS HANDY

Make sure that you have a supply of snacks readily available so that you can have something appropriate to eat every few hours. Try to stick to snacks that are low in sugar and fats. Why not have a bowl of fruit such as cherries or grapes in the house? Clementines, tangerines and satsumas are all rich in vitamin C. Nuts, dried figs and dates are good sources of a range of vitamins and minerals.

### AVOID SUGARY FOODS ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

If you eat a sugary food on empty stomach, the level of sugar in your blood rises quickly. The rapid rise in sugar level causes your body to produce too much insulin, which then causes your sugar level to fall quickly. Enjoy them as an occasional treat; have them

after a meal containing a lot of fibre, i.e. a meal with lots of vegetables, wholegrains or pulses. The fibre will have a cushioning effect and help to slow down the rise in sugar. If you do use sugar, use brown sugar instead of white sugar as it is less refined and won't be absorbed as quick.

### **AVOID DRINKING ALCOHOL ON AN EMPTY STOMACH**

Alcohol reduces the body's blood sugar levels. If you wish to drink alcohol make sure you have it with a meal that contains some fibre, which will help to cushion the adverse sugar effects.

### **AVOID CAFFEINE-CONTAINING DRINKS**

Caffeine, present in coffee, tea, cola-based drinks and hot chocolate, stimulates your pancreas to secrete more insulin. Increased insulin leads to lower sugar levels.

### **KEEP WEIGHT UNDER CONTROL**

Don't go on a crash diet. Successful weight loss is more likely to be achieved by subtle changes in your eating habits and lifestyle. Crash dieting also leads to hypoglycaemia. Whelehans have a free weight loss clinic where you get free and comprehensive support and information to help you lose weight. You can get weighed on a weekly basis and we calculate your body mass index. The consultation is done in a private room with a trained professional so confidentiality is assured. Call in to our store or Dial 04493 34591 for more information.

### **HEALTHY BODY AND MIND**

A healthy body and mind is much less likely to suffer from conditions such as hypoglycaemia. Relaxation and exercise are important to relieve stress. More information on stress relief can be obtained in Whelehans or at [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie). Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) is contained in omega 3 fatty acids which are found in oily fish and fish oils. EPA has been proven to help mood. It is thought that EPA helps the brain work more efficiently, so serotonin, which can boost your mood, has more of an effect on you.

In Whelehans, we recommend MorEpa<sup>®</sup> capsules as a one a day EPA supplement. They have the highest EPA level available on the market.

### **GIVE UP SMOKING**

Smoking compromises the body's ability to control blood sugar levels. Nicotine, present in cigarette smoke, increases the production of insulin and decreases the production of another hormone called glucagon. Glucagon is secreted in the liver in response to low blood sugar levels. Glucagon's role is to stimulate the liver to release glucose which has been stored in the liver as glycogen. Smoking reduces the body's ability to regulate glucagon.

## HAVE YOU ENOUGH CHROMIUM IN YOUR DIET?

Chromium is a mineral that is found in the body and needed in minute quantities. It is essential for the production of insulin, the hormone that the body produces to control blood sugar levels. Low levels of chromium in the body have been linked with poor blood sugar control. Some of the more concentrated sources of chromium are scallops, clams, cheese, black pepper, brewers' yeast, baked beans and whole wheat products.

**Disclaimer: Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended**

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie) or dial 04493 34591. You can also e-mail queries to [info@whelehans.ie](mailto:info@whelehans.ie).