

Outreach Resources

What to Do About Low–Blood-Sugar Levels

Low blood sugar for people living with type 1 diabetes (T1D) is indicated by a blood-glucose meter reading that is below the range specified by your physician. The following are general treatments for low blood sugar. People with T1D, physicians, or parents (for a child) should determine the specific course to follow when experiencing low blood-glucose levels. Please note that people with T1D have symptoms of low blood sugar at various readings. Some people with T1D feel perfectly fine at readings below 70; others begin to show low–blood-sugar symptoms at readings above 70.

1. If blood-sugar levels are slightly low and the person is alert and lucid, he or she should:

- Not exercise.
- Eat. After eating, check blood-sugar level again to make sure it is within the target range. The person may require another snack later in the day.
- Continue to check blood-sugar levels regularly.

2. If blood-sugar levels are low and the person with T1D is showing signs of low blood sugar but is still able to eat, he or she should:

- Immediately eat or drink a fast-acting source of glucose (e.g., juice, glucose gel, or tablets). He or she may need to eat more food after that (e.g., crackers or other complex carbohydrates).
- Continue to check blood-sugar levels regularly.

3. If blood-sugar levels are low and the person with T1D is showing signs of low blood sugar and is unconscious, convulsing, and/or is unable to swallow:

- Remain calm.
- **DO NOT** administer food or drink to an unconscious person, as it may obstruct the airway.
- Position the person on the floor on his or her side to prevent falling, injury, or choking.
- Call 911.
- Administer emergency glucagon shot (unconsciousness may last up to ten minutes post-glucagon; be prepared for vomiting as the person becomes conscious).
- Continue to check blood-sugar levels regularly.
- Give additional food (e.g., crackers or other complex carbohydrates) when the person is able to eat, if necessary, to keep blood-sugar levels in target range.