

Treating Hypoglycemia and Type 1 Diabetes

Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, is a condition in which the body's blood sugar levels fall too low. This handout will explain hypoglycemia, the causes and signs of hypoglycemia and what you can do to help treat and prevent hypoglycemia.

WHAT IS HYPOGLYCEMIA?

When a child has diabetes, the amount of sugar, or glucose, in his or her blood can fall too low. **A low blood sugar level is called hypoglycemia.** Blood sugar levels can fall very quickly.

Generally, when your child's blood sugar level is **less than 70 mg/dL**, he or she has hypoglycemia. However, your child's doctor or nurse might give you a specific blood sugar measure at which your child should be treated for hypoglycemia. The blood sugar level given varies for different people with Type 1 diabetes. It depends on whether you have just been diagnosed with diabetes or whether you have had it for a long time. It can also depend on your age or on the time of day.

When your child has hypoglycemia, he or she will need treatment right away.

WHAT CAUSES HYPOGLYCEMIA?

There are a few causes of hypoglycemia, including:

- **Physical activity or exercise**
This is the most common cause of hypoglycemia. Your child can develop hypoglycemia soon after exercising or from 4-12 hours after exercise. Sometimes it can happen up to 24 hours (**delayed hypoglycemia**)
- **Missed meal or snack** (When your child does not eat the amount of food he or she planned to eat)
- **Miscounting carbohydrates in foods**
- **Making a mistake in drawing up or administering insulin (insulin dose is too high)**
- **If your child is sick, vomiting or has diarrhea**

*If you are concerned or have questions, please call us at (617)726-2909.
We want to hear from you!*

HOW CAN I HELP KEEP MY CHILD'S BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS NORMAL?

Hypoglycemia happens to everyone with Type 1 diabetes at some point in their lives. It is a normal part of having Type 1 diabetes, even though it can make you nervous at times. Severe hypoglycemia is rare, but serious. Your child will need treatment right away if he or she develops hypoglycemia.

Here are some ways you can help keep your child's blood sugar levels within a normal range while eating:

- **If your child doesn't finish a meal, give him or her different forms of carbohydrate, like milk.**
If your child doesn't finish his or her meals often, you might need to think about giving some or all of your child's insulin after he or she is done eating. Talk about this with your child's treatment team.
- **If you're counting carbohydrates for the first time and you're not sure about the ingredients in a meal, try to underestimate the number of carbohydrates in that meal.**
This is helpful when you're eating out at a restaurant and the nutrition information isn't always available.

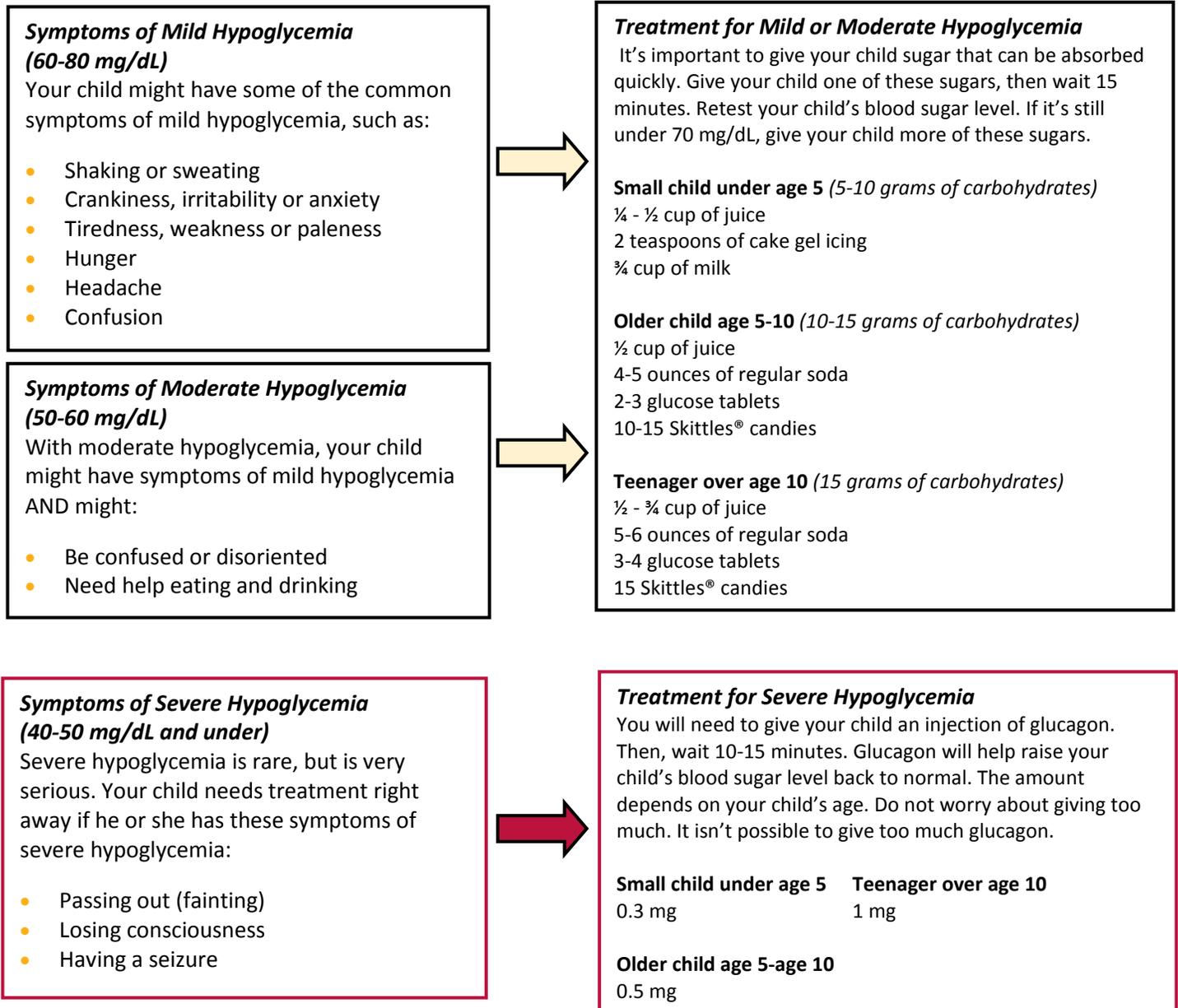
Here are some tips on how to keep your child's blood sugar levels within a normal range while exercising:

- **As a general rule, you should check your child's blood sugar levels before he or she exercises.**
If your child's blood sugar level is lower than 150 mg/dL, your child should eat a small snack (15g of carbohydrates) for each hour of planned activity before exercising.
- **To help prevent hypoglycemia related to exercise, talk with your child's doctor or nurse to adjust insulin dose before and after exercise.**
- **If your child has an insulin pump, he or she could disconnect from the pump and set a temporary basal rate before, during or after exercise.** This depends on when your child is more likely to develop hypoglycemia.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND TREATMENT FOR HYPOGLYCEMIA?

Some children might have symptoms of hypoglycemia while others will not feel anything different. You might realize your child has hypoglycemia when you do regular blood sugar tests and find that his or her blood sugar level is low.

There are 3 levels of hypoglycemia: mild, moderate and severe. Young children might not show these symptoms. Sometimes, they just might not seem like themselves. Here are the symptoms your child might have at each level and how you can help your child, depending on his or her age:



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