

Diabetes and Exercise

Any form of exercise can be associated with an increased risk of low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia), but this should not put you off taking part, you just need to be more aware.

Hypoglycaemia is more likely to occur if you are taking a medication such as gliclazide (a sulphonylurea medication) or you are on insulin.

How can I reduce the risk of low blood glucose when exercising?

Before coming to one of the exercise classes, please ensure you are well, are not on any antibiotics, you have taken all relevant medications and that you have eaten (ensure carbohydrates are included within your meal).

If you have a libre sensor please ensure you bring your mobile phone or reader with you so we can check pre and post exercise blood glucose levels and mid-way if needed. If you do not have a libre, we will check your blood glucose level using our blood glucose meter (as we know it has been calibrated), but please feel free to bring your own lancing device with you.

Exercise can cause blood sugar levels to drop for up to 48 hours after finishing, depending on the type of exercise being performed. Some people on insulin can/will reduce their insulin dose prior to and after exercise. Some people may adjust additional carbohydrates if they do not titrate their own insulin.

How do I know I am having a low blood sugar episode (hypoglycaemic episode) if I have not experienced one?

Some signs and symptoms of low blood sugar levels can be:

Sweating, dizziness, palpitations, wobbly and confused, headaches, tingling of lips and tongue.

You could possibly have no symptoms, but when your blood sugar level is checked, if it is 4 mmol/L or below this means you have low blood sugar or are hypoglycaemic and require treatment.

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Other people may notice you:

Looking pale, slurring your words, acting strangely, appearing 'drunk'.

How should I treat a low blood glucose episode?

- 200ml full sugar Lucozade
- 200ml carton of pure orange juice
- 150ml (small can) of full sugar lemonade/coke etc
- 5 or 6 dextrose tablets or jelly babies
- Glucogel or equivalent

If you do not feel better or if your blood glucose level is not above 4 mmol/L after 10 minutes repeat one of the above treatments.

When you feel better or your blood glucose reading is more than 4mmol/L take your long-acting carbohydrate (or your blood glucose level will drop back down again).

A long-acting carbohydrate would be a sandwich, 2 plain biscuits or a banana.

Please bring your own treatment to all classes. We do have treatment if you forget.

Please inform the team if you do not have any symptoms when your blood sugar is low or if you are not aware of when it is low.

Driving regulations

After a hypoglycaemic episode you cannot drive for 45 minutes after the event and your blood glucose level needs to be above 5 mmols to drive.

For further information about diabetes and exercise please visit the Diabetes UK website (www.diabetes.org.uk) or please speak to your Diabetes team or nurse.

Always carry identification that says you have Diabetes.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.youreexperience@nhs.net

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