

Low Blood Sugar and Sick Days: Your Safety Guide

Medical-Surgical · Endocrine (Diabetes, Thyroid)

Low blood sugar means your sugar is under 70 mg/dL, and it needs fast treatment. Being sick often pushes your sugar very high, so sick days need a plan too.

Know the signs of low sugar

- Shaky, sweaty, or a fast heartbeat
- Very hungry, nervous, or cranky
- Headache, blurry vision, or confusion
- Not sure? Check your sugar.

Treat it with the rule of 15

- Take 15 g of fast sugar: 4 oz (1/2 cup) of juice or regular soda, 3 to 4 glucose tablets, or 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey.
- Wait 15 minutes. Check again. Still under 70? Repeat.
- Next meal more than 1 hour away? Eat a snack.
- Do not use chocolate. It works too slowly.

Teach your family about glucagon

- If you pass out or cannot swallow, your family gives glucagon.
- They put nothing in your mouth, turn you on your side, and call 911.

Prevent low sugar

- Do not skip meals. Carry fast sugar with you.
- Check your sugar before you drive or exercise.
- Drink alcohol only with food. Wear a medical ID.

Follow your sick-day rules

- **Keep taking your insulin, even if you eat less.**
- Check your sugar every 2 to 4 hours.
- Drink 8 oz of sugar-free fluid every hour while awake.
- Check ketones if you have type 1 diabetes or your sugar is over 250.

Call your provider today if you have

- Sugar over 250 two times in a row while sick
- Moderate or large ketones
- Vomiting, or you cannot keep fluids down
- Lows often, or lows with no warning signs

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Passing out or a seizure
- Trouble swallowing safely
- Vomiting with fruity breath or fast, deep breathing
- Confusion that does not get better after treatment

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/low-blood-sugar-hypoglycemia/patient

© 2026 NCLEXPace.