

HYPOGLYCEMIA, FUNCTIONAL



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A low level of blood sugar (glucose) in the body. Functional (or reactive) hypoglycemia is usually a reaction to eating. It is not a disease in itself and is not a common medical condition as many persons would believe. Symptoms vary greatly among people in frequency and severity.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Headache.
- Nervousness or anxiety.
- Sweating.
- Dizziness.
- Fast heartbeat.
- Weakness or faintness.
- Shaking muscles.
- Hunger.
- More severe symptoms are less likely. They may include being forgetful, poor concentration, confusion, poor coordination, or slurred speech.

CAUSES

The amount of sugar (glucose) in the blood normally increases for one to two hours after a meal, especially a high-carbohydrate meal (sugars and starches). In many people, instead of increasing, the glucose level may drop to a level that is lower than before the meal. It will then rise back again to normal levels. Most of these people do not have any symptoms from the drop in glucose levels. In a few, the symptoms of hypoglycemia occur.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Improper diet.
- Obesity.
- Smoking, alcohol, stress, or other emotional or mental problems may contribute.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Follow instructions under Diet.
- Get treatment for emotional problems such as stress.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Recognize early symptoms and drink or eat something that contains sugar.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The symptoms usually clear up on their own or with glucose in a very short period of time. A change in diet may help prevent symptoms from occurring in the future.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

None expected.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider may do a physical exam. Medical tests may include blood-sugar and glucose-tolerance studies to rule out other medical problems.
- Long-term treatment usually involves diet changes.
- Short-term treatment during an episode can raise blood sugar more quickly. This includes drinking juice or a soft drink or eating candy to raise the glucose level. Take a protein food, such as milk or cheese, at the same time. This helps the body slowly absorb the glucose and avoid a "seesaw" effect of glucose levels.
- Counseling or other therapy may help you learn to cope with stress or emotional problems.

MEDICATIONS

Drugs are not usually needed for treatment.

ACTIVITY

Regular exercise may improve blood-sugar control. It can help to reduce stress and build self-esteem. It helps to control and maintain an ideal weight. It also helps improve heart and lung function, lower blood pressure, improve blood circulation, and lower cholesterol levels.

DIET

- Eat several smaller meals a day that are low in simple carbohydrates, moderate in fats, and high in protein.
- Don't skip meals.
- Between-meal snacks should include protein, such as chicken, eggs, cheese, nuts, or skim milk, rather than carbohydrates.
- Avoid sugar and foods containing sugar (especially on an empty stomach).
- Weight-loss diet will help if being overweight is a problem.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, or soft drinks).



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has symptoms of functional hypoglycemia.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page