

# Hypo and hyper: quick guide

Low and high blood sugar: signs, what to do and when to call 999

Always follow the person's diabetes care plan first. This summary is based on NHS advice.

| Hypo: LOW blood sugar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Hyper: HIGH blood sugar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>Signs</b><br>Hungry, dizzy, anxious or irritable; sweating, shaking, tingling lips; palpitations; tired or weak; blurred vision; confused                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Signs</b><br>Very thirsty; peeing a lot; weak or tired; blurred vision; losing weight                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>If awake and able to swallow</b><br>1. Give a sugary drink or snack: a small glass of fruit juice or sugary fizzy drink, 5 glucose or dextrose tablets, 4 large jelly babies or 2 tubes of glucose gel.<br>2. Check blood sugar after 10 to 15 minutes (if trained and in the care plan).<br>3. Still below 4mmol/L? Repeat and check again after 10 minutes.<br>4. Once above 4mmol/L and feeling better: something more filling, such as biscuits, a sandwich or their next meal. | <b>What to do</b><br>Follow the care plan, including any sick day rules.<br>Tell the nurse, GP or diabetes team.<br>Never change diabetes medicine yourself.<br><br><b>Common triggers</b><br>Being unwell or stressed, eating more sugary or starchy food than usual, being less active, missing a dose of diabetes medicine. |
| <b>If unconscious or unable to swallow</b><br>Give no food or drink. Recovery position.<br>Glucagon injection straight away if available and you're trained.<br><b>Call 999</b> if glucagon isn't available or nobody can give it, if no recovery 10 minutes after the injection, or if they've drunk alcohol.                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Call 999 or go to A&amp;E</b> if high blood sugar comes with: feeling or being sick or stomach pain; faster breathing or heart rate; drowsiness or confusion; fruity-smelling breath; high ketones. These can be signs of diabetic ketoacidosis.                                                                            |

**Sources** (checked 16 September 2026): NHS: Low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia) (reviewed 3 August 2023); NHS: High blood sugar (hyperglycaemia) (reviewed 17 March 2026).

A quick-reference resource only. Always follow the person's care plan, your organisation's policies and procedures, and current national guidance.

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