

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
Signs Hungry, dizzy, anxious or irritable; sweating, shaking, tingling lips; palpitations; tired or weak; blurred vision; confused	Signs Very thirsty; peeing a lot; weak or tired; blurred vision; losing weight
If awake and able to swallow 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. 2. Check blood sugar after 10 to 15 minutes (if trained and in the care plan). 3. Still below 4mmol/L? Repeat and check again after 10 minutes. 4. Once above 4mmol/L and feeling better: something more filling, such as biscuits, a sandwich or their next meal.	What to do Follow the care plan, including any sick day rules. Tell the nurse, GP or diabetes team. Never change diabetes medicine yourself.
If unconscious or unable to swallow Give no food or drink. Recovery position. Glucagon injection straight away if available and you're trained. Call 999 if glucagon isn't available or nobody can give it, if no recovery 10 minutes after the injection, or if they've drunk alcohol.	Common triggers Being unwell or stressed, eating more sugary or starchy food than usual, being less active, missing a dose of diabetes medicine.
	Call 999 or go to A&E 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 current national guidance.

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