Diabetes and Driving

When you take insulin or some types of pills for diabetes, you are at risk of having a low blood sugar while driving. These medications may lower your blood sugar quickly.

If you have a low blood sugar while driving, you are a danger to yourself and others. A low blood sugar which is less than 4.0 mmol/L is also called hypoglycemia.

Your blood sugar should be over 5.0 mmol/L to drive.

**Remember:** “Over 5 to Drive”

**What do I need to do before I drive?**

**Always test your blood sugar just before driving.**

- If your blood sugar is **over 5.0 mmol/L**, you can drive.

  Test your blood sugar after every 4 hours of driving.

- If your blood sugar is **4.0 to 5.0 mmol/L**, eat a snack with carbohydrate, such as cheese and crackers or ½ a sandwich to raise your blood sugar over 5.0 mmol/L.

- If your blood sugar is **less than 4.0 mmol/L** or you have one or more of the symptoms of a low blood sugar, you need to raise your blood sugar quickly by doing **Steps 1 and 2**.

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This handout is for self-care. It should not be used to replace a visit with your healthcare provider. If you have questions about your personal medical situation, please call your healthcare provider.
How do I treat low blood sugar?

Step 1
Stop what you are doing. Eat or drink 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrate.

Choose one of these:

- 4 DEX4™ tablets
- 3 teaspoons, cubes or packets of table sugar (may be dissolved in water)
- 3 teaspoons of honey
- ¾ cup regular pop (not sugar free or diet)
- ¾ cup fruit juice
- 6 to 8 Lifesavers™

1 teaspoon = 5 mL, 1 tablespoon = 15 mL, ½ cup = 125 mL, ¾ cup = 175 mL,
1 cup = 250 mL, 1 oz = 30 grams

Step 2
Wait 15 minutes. Do not drive. Check your blood sugar again:

- If your blood sugar is still 4.0 mmol/L or less or your symptoms have not gone away, repeat Step 1.
- If your blood sugar is over 4.0 mmol/L, have a snack such as a granola bar, cheese and crackers or ½ sandwich to raise and keep your blood sugar above 4.0 mmol/L.
- Once your blood sugar is over 5.0 mmol/L, then you can drive.

After you treat a low blood sugar, always wait 45 to 60 minutes before you drive.

You need this time to fully recover and be able to drive safely.
What causes a low blood sugar?

Low blood sugar can be caused by:

• not eating at regular times or missing meals or snacks
• eating less carbohydrate than usual
• doing more exercise or activity than usual
• taking more diabetes medication or insulin than you need
• drinking alcohol

What happens when your blood sugar is low?

You may have one or more of these symptoms:

• headache
• blurry eyesight
• hunger
• anxiety
• irritability
• sweating
• dizziness
• shaking
• fast heartbeat
• weakness, feeling tired

What should I do if I have symptoms of low blood sugar while I am driving?

If you feel that your blood sugar is low:

• pull to the side of the road and stop driving
• remove your keys from the ignition
• test your blood sugar
• treat a low blood sugar by doing Step 1 and Step 2
• wait 45 to 60 minutes before driving
Drive safely

Always wear your medical alert identification.

Keep an “emergency kit” in your vehicle to prevent or treat low blood sugars.

This kit should contain:
• glucose tablets
• drinks with sugar such as juice or regular pop
• granola bars
• 2 or 3 plain cookies

Always travel with your blood glucose monitor and testing supplies.

Do not keep your monitor and supplies in the vehicle as they can be affected by hot or cold temperatures.

When is it unsafe to drive?

A person who is likely to have a low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) may not be fit to drive.

You may need to test your blood sugar more often if you:
• recently started taking insulin
• cannot recognize early signs of hypoglycemia
• are not testing your blood sugar regularly or keeping your blood sugar well controlled
• have moderate hypoglycemia (needing others’ help) or severe hypoglycemia (needing emergency medical care)

By law, doctors must report anyone they consider to be unfit to drive.

It is important to follow up with your health care provider to review your blood sugar patterns.

What should I know when I renew my driver’s licence?

If you use insulin, and need to renew your driver’s licence, you may need to complete forms to let the Ministry of Transportation know how often you have hypoglycemia.

Completion of these forms may take time, so don’t delay.

Start early with your renewal, so your license does not expire.

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