

Diet advice for adults with reactive hypoglycaemia

Diabetes- Dietetics

Information for Patients

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What is reactive hypoglycaemia?

Reactive hypoglycaemia is a condition that causes low blood glucose levels after you eat. This usually happens 2 to 4 hours after a meal. It is thought that reactive hypoglycaemia is caused by your body making too much insulin (this is a hormone that lowers blood glucose levels). This happens after a meal that is high in carbohydrates. Your body keeps making extra insulin after the glucose from your meal has been digested. This causes the amount of glucose in your blood to drop below a normal level. The cause of this is unclear.

Reactive hypoglycaemia can happen in people with and without diabetes. It can also happen in people who have had gastric bypass surgery.

What are the symptoms? (You will experience some of these symptoms)

- Anxiety
- Weakness or tiredness
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Dizzy spells
- Headaches
- Increased hunger
- Heart palpitations -feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart
- Light-headedness
- Sweating

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What can I do if I have reactive hypoglycaemia?

If you test your blood glucose and it is less than 4mmol/l, you need to eat 15-20g of fast acting carbohydrate. Examples of this are:

- 4 large jelly babies (may vary depending on brand therefore check the food label) **or**
- a small (200ml) carton of pure fruit juice **or**
- 150-200ml full sugar Coca cola **or**
- 5-7 dextrose tablets

When your blood glucose has returned to 4mmol/l or above, you should then have a snack that has 15– 20g of slow-acting carbohydrate to stop your blood glucose dropping again. This snack could be a sandwich, piece of fruit, cereal or some biscuits and milk. This could also be your next meal, if it is due.

How can I manage my reactive hypoglycaemia?

Control portions of carbohydrate.

- Eating smaller carbohydrate portions reduces the rise in blood glucose levels after your meal. This reduces the amount of insulin your body makes (insulin secretion).
- At meal times try to only have 30g of carbohydrate
- Carbohydrates are the main source of fuel for your body. You should not completely avoid them.

Eat smaller meals, more often.

- Try to eat 6 smaller meals a day, instead of 3 larger meals.

Avoid 'high glycaemic index' foods and have 'low glycaemic index' foods instead.

- Some carbohydrate foods break down more quickly than others
- Choose high fibre options

Low glycaemic index foods include:

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| • Beans/ lentils | • Bulgur wheat, barley, couscous, quinoa |
| • Fruits, for example, apple, pears, berries | • Jumbo oats or regular oats not quick cook or instant |
| • Multigrain or granary bread, rye bread, seeded bread, sourdough bread, whole wheat pita/ tortillas | • New potatoes in their skins, sweet potato, yam, cold boiled potatoes (cold potatoes are lower GI than hot potatoes) |
| • All pasta cooked until al dente, instant noodles | • Basmati rice, long grain or brown rice |
| • Muesli, or bran-based cereals (choose no-added sugar options) | • Bean products (hummus, tofu) |

Avoid high glycaemic index foods, for example:

- White bread
- White rice
- Breakfast cereals
- Cakes and desserts
- Mashed potatoes
- Instant porridge
- Sugary drinks, for example, smoothies, juice
- Sweets

Avoid or limit sugary foods and drinks

- Eat less foods with added sugars. This helps to stop a rapid rise in blood glucose which can trigger reactive hypoglycaemia.
- Avoid full sugar fizzy drinks, energy drinks, fruit juice or smoothies, sweets, sugar or honey added to tea/ coffee.

Eat balanced meals

- Include foods that have heart healthy fats (unsaturated fat), for example nuts, seeds, olive oil, avocado
- Include a source of protein, for example meat, fish, lentils, egg
- Include a portion of fruit or vegetables

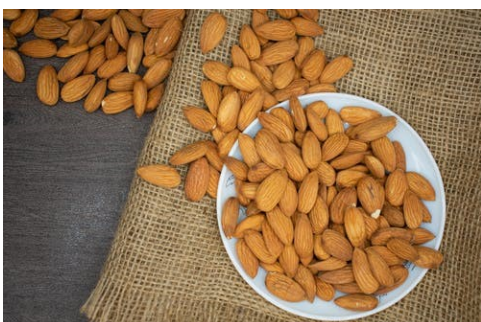
Limit caffeine

- Caffeine has been shown to make symptoms of hypoglycaemia worse.
- Choose decaffeinated drinks as much as possible.

Limit the amount of alcohol you drink

A Mediterranean diet can help to control symptoms of reactive hypoglycaemia.

- A Mediterranean diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, healthy fats like olive oil and nuts.





Example meal plan 1

Breakfast	Poached egg with wholegrain bread Peach
Mid– morning snack	Small pot low fat plain yogurt with almonds and half a banana sliced
Lunch	Salmon stir-fry with red pepper, broccoli and kale served with brown rice
Mid-afternoon snack	A handful of unsalted nuts and seeds with dried fruit
Dinner	Vegetarian chilli served with bulgur wheat and a salad
Evening snack	Glass of milk

Example meal plan 2

Breakfast	Porridge with chopped pecans and blueberries
Mid– morning snack	Low fat cheese on rye crisp bread
Lunch	Chicken whole-wheat tortilla wrap with shredded lettuce and Mayonnaise. Cucumber and red pepper sticks Plum
Mid-afternoon snack	Hummus with celery, carrot sticks and cherry tomatoes
Dinner	Fish baked with lemon and onions, served with quinoa, steamed broccoli sprinkled with sesame seeds
Evening snack	Apple or banana slices and peanut butter

Contact details

Department of:

Contact details:

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Previous reference:

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