
Nutrition for Reactive (Postprandial) Hypoglycemia

What is Hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia means low blood sugar. Symptoms of hypoglycemia may include sweating, nervousness, tremors, a rapid heartbeat, hunger, and possibly blurred vision and confusion.

In reactive or postprandial hypoglycemia symptoms are felt when blood sugar levels fall 2 to 5 hours after eating.

How can I control hypoglycemia symptoms?

Follow these healthy eating guidelines to help keep blood sugar levels steady and to give you the nutrients you need for good health.

- 1. Eat more often, up to 6 times a day.**
Eat a small meal or snack about every three hours. Skipping meals or not eating for long periods of time can make symptoms worse.
- 2. At each meal/snack, eat a variety of foods from Canada's Food Guide for a well balanced diet.** The four food groups from Canada's Food Guide are: Grain Products, Vegetables and Fruit, Milk Products, and Meat and Alternatives.
- 3. Choose high fibre carbohydrate foods at each meal or snack.** High fibre foods help keep blood sugar levels steady.

Examples are whole grain breads, cereals, pastas, brown rice, dried peas, beans and lentils, whole fruits and vegetables, and dried fruits (in moderation)

When you increase fibre, be sure to drink extra fluids as well.

- 4. Eat protein foods at each meal and snack.** Including proteins at each meal and snack helps to keep blood sugar levels even.

Good sources of protein include: lean meat, skinless chicken, fish, eggs, dried peas, beans and lentils, tofu, soymilk, peanut butter, nut butters, low fat milk and milk products.

- 5. Limit simple sugars** such as candy, honey, jams, jellies, molasses, sugar, syrup, sweetened drinks, large amounts of fruit juice, and sweet desserts. Large amounts can make hypoglycemia symptoms worse, especially if eaten on an empty stomach. Keep amounts moderate and eat them with other foods.
- 6. Limit caffeine and alcohol.** The caffeine in regular coffee, tea, and cola can make symptoms worse. Limit caffeinated beverages to no more than 2 per day.

Alcohol can cause low blood sugar. Discuss alcohol use with your doctor or dietitian.

- 7. The best time to exercise** is after a meal, or after a high carbohydrate snack.

This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or individual consultation with a registered dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety.



Sample Menu for Hypoglycemia

Breakfast

Fruit
 Whole grain cereal (with more than 3 grams of fibre per serving)
 Low fat milk
 Water and/or decaffeinated coffee/tea/herb tea or grain beverage (unsweetened Postum or Ovaltine)

Mid-morning snack*

Whole grain toast, bagel or muffin
 Peanut butter, egg or low-fat cheese

Lunch

Vegetable or bean soup
 Half Sandwich made with fish, lean meat or poultry, or cheese
 Margarine or Mayonnaise
 Sliced tomato and lettuce
 Fruit
 Water

Mid-afternoon snack*

Half sandwich from lunch
 Low-fat milk or yogurt

Dinner

Tossed salad with low fat dressing
 Cooked vegetables
 Baked potato with skin, brown rice or whole wheat pasta
 Fish, lean meat or poultry or alternative
 Fresh or canned fruit packed in juice
 Low-fat milk or yogurt
 Water and/or herbal tea

Evening snack*

Low fat milk
 Graham wafers

*Examples of healthy snacks

- Whole grain cereal with low-fat milk
- Fruit smoothie made with low-fat milk/soft tofu
- Graham wafers and low-fat yogurt
- Cottage cheese with fresh fruit
- Whole grain crackers with lower fat cheese (<20% M.F.)
- Hummus (chickpea and sesame seed paste dip) with whole wheat pita bread
- Whole wheat sandwich or tortilla wrap with lean protein filling
- Seeds or nuts (high in fat, so use in moderation) and dried fruit
- Air-popped popcorn with low-fat cheese
- Whole grain bagel with low-fat cream cheese
- Whole wheat toast with peanut butter
- Carrot sticks, lower fat cheese stick and whole grain crackers
- Raw vegetables with low-fat yogurt dip and whole grain crackers
- Homemade whole wheat banana bread made with a small amount of sweetener, spread with nut butter
- Homemade whole wheat bran muffin made with a small amount of sweetener, with low-fat cheese or low-fat milk

Recommended Resources

1. Graham, K. (1998). *Meals for good health*. Portage la Prairie, MB: Paper Birch Publishing.
2. Hollands, M., & Howard, M. (1996). *More choice menus*. Toronto, ON: Macmillan Canada.
3. Hollands, M., & Howard, M. (1993). *Choice menus*. Toronto, ON: Macmillan Canada.

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