



# WELLNESS BULLETIN

## BLOOD SUGAR MANAGEMENT

California Department of Developmental Services

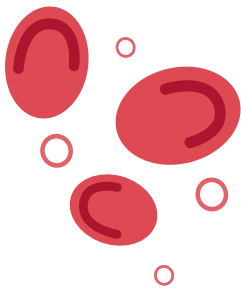
MARCH 2024



Is this bulletin useful?

It is critical to manage blood sugar levels to avoid health risks. This Wellness Bulletin explains how to maintain healthy levels and what to do in the case of high or low blood sugar. Managing blood sugar levels helps prevent or delay long-term, serious health problems, such as heart disease, vision loss, and kidney disease. Help the individuals you support understand how and why keeping blood sugar at a healthy level can help improve their health, energy and mood. Sources: [CDC](#), [Mayo Clinic](#)

## What is Blood Sugar and Why is it Important?



Blood sugar, also known as blood glucose, is the fuel in the blood that gives it energy. The body gets blood sugar from the food we eat. Most bodies constantly try to keep glucose levels within a healthy range to match energy demands.

Insulin is a hormone most individuals naturally produce. Insulin helps control how the body uses and stores blood sugar. People with diabetes have difficulty producing insulin, so their blood sugar levels can build up in their blood rather than going into cells.

Source: [Cleveland Clinic](#)

## What are the Risks of Not Managing Blood Sugar?

Blood sugar is important to manage and should stay within a healthy range. Normally, blood sugar levels should range between 80 to 130 milligrams per deciliter. If blood sugar levels get too low, people can lose the ability to think and function normally. If blood sugar levels get too high and stay high, they can cause damage or complications to the body over time.

Source: [American Diabetes Association](#)



Wellness and Safety Bulletins are produced by the Department of Developmental Services to alert direct service providers, regional center staff, and others about specific risks identified with our community. Please provide feedback on this bulletin and what we can do better through this survey: [Bulletin Survey](#)

# Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

Low blood sugar can be dangerous and should be treated immediately. Blood sugar levels below 70 mg/DL is considered low and below 55mg/DL is considered critical.

If you support an individual with diabetes or a history of low blood sugar, talk with them and their primary care team about how to routinely check their blood sugar levels. Know the individual's unique symptoms so you can identify and treat their low blood sugar early. Discuss with the individual's health care team if a glucagon kit should be available and how to use it.

## Causes

Low blood sugar has many causes, including:

- Missing a meal; how much fat, protein, and fiber are in a meal
- Drinking alcohol
- Exercising more than usual
- Unexpected changes in schedule
- Spending time at high altitudes; humid and hot weather; traveling
- Going through puberty; menstruation
- For individuals who take insulin, not managing their insulin intake:
  - Taking too much insulin,
  - Not eating enough carbohydrates for the amount of insulin taken, or
  - Timing of when insulin is taken

## Recognizing Signs

Signs of low blood sugar are different for everyone. Common symptoms include:

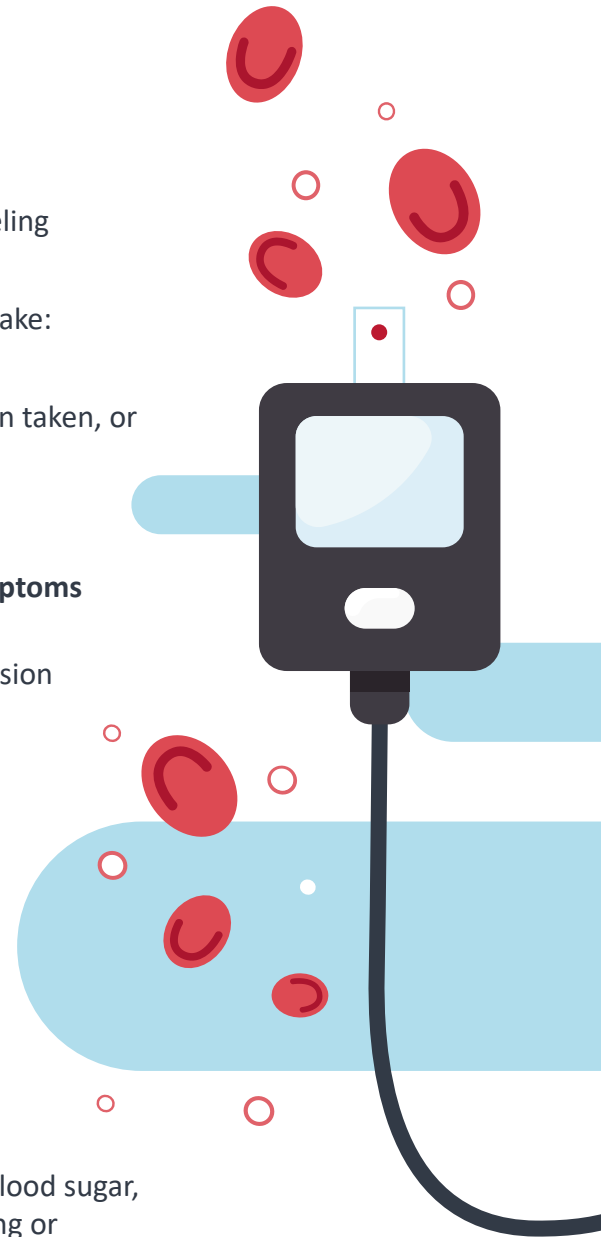
- Shaking, sweating, nervousness or anxiety; irritability or confusion
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or instability on their feet
- Fatigue, hunger, or nausea
- Irregular or fast heartbeat
- Tingling or numbness of the lips, tongue, or cheek

Sources: [CDC](#); [CDC](#); [Mayo Clinic](#); [DDS Clinical Services](#)

## Treating

If you support an individual with diabetes, be familiar with how to check their blood sugar levels and what to do if they have low blood sugar.

Once you have provided doctor-recommended treatment for low blood sugar, give it 15 minutes to work. Blood sugar takes time to rise after eating or drinking. If the individual has a glucose monitor, help check their blood sugar levels and see if they are feeling better after 15 minutes.



## When to Call 911



**Call 911 anytime you are concerned about severely low blood sugar (below 55 mg/DL)**

If an individual passes out.

If 20 minutes after treatment has been administered an individual's blood sugar stays too low or they are still unresponsive to treatment that usually works.

Source: [CDC](#)

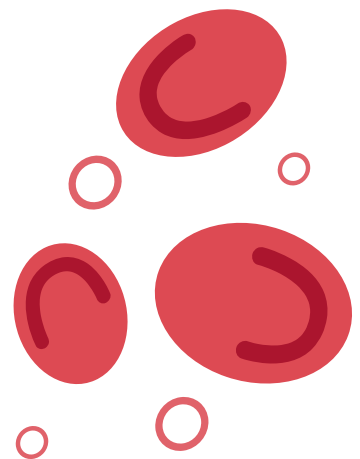
## High Blood Sugar (Hyperglycemia)

Over time, high blood sugar can lead to long-term, serious health problems. Many things can cause high blood sugar, including being sick, being stressed, eating more than planned, and not getting enough insulin.

**Symptoms of high blood sugar include:**

- Feeling very tired
- Feeling thirsty
- Having blurry vision
- Needing to urinate more often

Source: [CDC](#)



## Share Tips to Maintain Healthy Blood Sugar Levels

**Help the individuals you support keep their blood sugar from dropping too low or becoming too high by encouraging them to:**

- Keep track of blood sugar levels to understand what makes them increase or decrease.
- Maintain an ideal body weight. Talk with the individual and their doctor about their ideal weight.
- Have a healthy and balanced diet that includes fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy proteins. Assist the individuals you support choose nutritious foods and limit foods that are high in saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, and salt. Limit processed and packaged foods. [See Prevention and Wellness: Healthy Diet bulletin.](#)
- Eat healthy food portions.
  - Fill half the plate with vegetables, a quarter with lean protein, and a quarter with a grain or starchy food.
- Eat meals at regular times of the day. Encourage individuals not to skip meals.

# Share Tips to Maintain Healthy Blood Sugar Levels

(continued)

Help the individuals you support track the foods and drinks they consume.

Exercise and engage in physical activity regularly. Encourage individuals to try get at least 20-25 minutes of physical activity every day. [See Prevention and Wellness: Physical Health bulletin.](#)

Drink water instead of sugary beverages like soda or juice.

Limit alcohol intake.



## Statistics




THERE WERE A TOTAL OF **101** REPORTED UNPLANNED HOSPITALIZATIONS RELATED TO DIABETES BETWEEN JANUARY 1 – JUNE 30 OF 2023

REGIONAL CENTERS CURRENTLY SUPPORT **11,383** INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE DIABETES.

(DDS SPECIAL INCIDENT REPORT [SIR] DATA)



## Additional Resources

-  [Prevention & Wellness: Healthy Diet \(ca.gov\)](#)
-  [Prevention & Wellness: Physical Health \(ca.gov\)](#)
-  [Blood Glucose Levels | ADA \(diabetes.org\)](#)