

Low Blood Sugar after Bariatric Surgery

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) can occur after bariatric surgery, even if you do not have a history of diabetes.

It usually happens one to three hours after eating, especially if the foods you are choosing are high in fast-acting carbohydrates (sugar) or you are eating normally but are more active than usual. Bariatric surgery changes your body's hormonal response to the foods that you eat, and this can cause low blood sugar. Hypoglycemia is uncomfortable and may be dangerous, but it is easy to treat.

SYMPTOMS OF HYPOGLYCEMIA

Common

- Shaky or dizzy feeling
- Difficulty concentrating
- Headache
- Sleepiness
- Feeling sweaty or clammy

Rare

- Heart palpitations
- Feelings of anxiety
- Seizure

Hypoglycemia is serious and needs to be treated. If you feel like you have low blood sugar, treat it even if it means eating more than you were planning to eat.

HOW TO TREAT POST-BARIATRIC HYPOGLYCEMIA

- 1 The best way to treat hypoglycemia is to prevent it. Make sure you are eating small amounts of slow-acting carbohydrate foods throughout the day. These foods include whole grains and starchy vegetables.

 - a These are not the only foods you should be eating. Making sure your meals follow the balanced plate will help keep your blood sugar stable all through the day.
- 2 Make sure you are not skipping meals and that you include snacks as appropriate to keep your blood sugar level stable. You should eat something every three to four hours.
- 3 If you do experience hypoglycemia, you should treat it as soon as possible by eating 10–15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrate.

 - a The best option is glucose tabs. These are available in the pharmacy. Bariatric patients should start by taking two tabs. If you are not feeling better in 10–15 minutes, you should take two more.
- b If you do not have glucose tabs, a half piece of dry toast or ½ cup of skim milk would be an appropriate food choice.
- c If you must, 3–4 tablespoons of sweet tea or juice would also work, but be aware that in too large of servings these may cause dumping. Glucose tabs or foods are preferable treatments.
- 4 Log your food, activity and low blood sugar episodes to help determine what changes will be needed to help fix the problem.
- 5 If you experience hypoglycemia more than one time, you should make an appointment to see a bariatric dietitian.