University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Patient Information

Nutrition and Dietetics

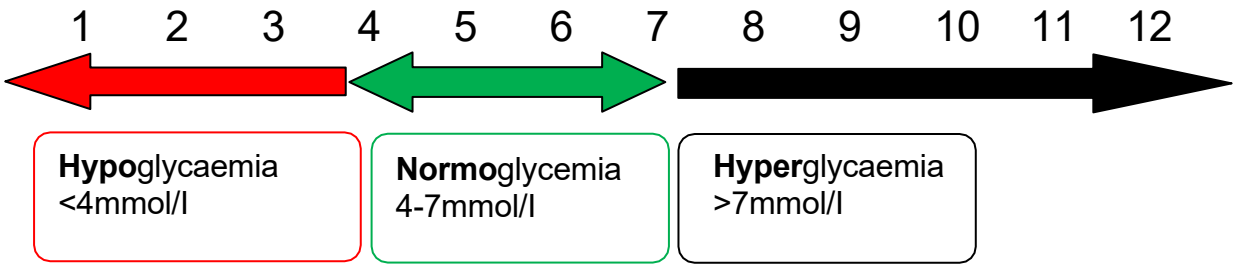
Paediatric diabetes - Hypoglycaemia

If you have any questions, please speak to your paediatric dietitian, diabetes nurse or paediatrician.

What is hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia, or a 'hypo,' happens when the sugar (glucose) in the blood drops too low. A blood glucose level of **less than 4.0 mmol/l** is considered a hypo.

If you think you may be having a hypo, **check your blood glucose by using your sensor or doing a finger prick test**. This will tell you if your blood sugar is low.



Your friends, teachers and family need to know about hypos so they can help you.

Causes of hypoglycaemia

Hypoglycaemia can happen for different reasons, including:

- Exercise
- Too much insulin, or insulin given at the wrong time
- Not eating enough carbohydrate with insulin
- Stress or illness (this can also cause high glucose)
- Hot weather
- Injecting into lumpy areas of the skin
- Drinking alcohol

Symptoms of hypoglycaemia

Symptoms can be different for each person, but may include:

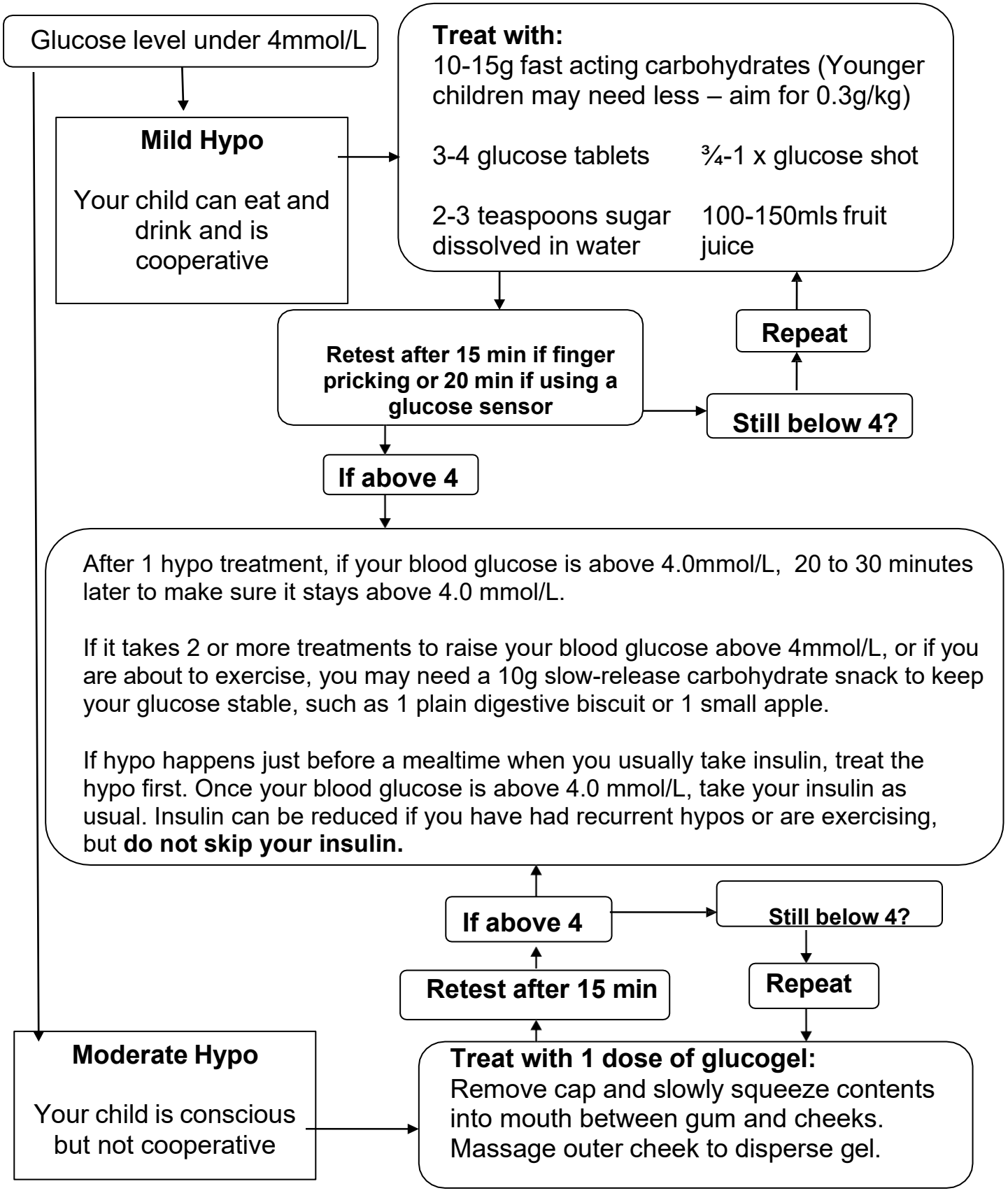
- Tiredness or fatigue
- Feeling hungry
- Feeling strange, faint, or dizzy
- Feeling shaky, trembly, or wobbly
- Mood changes or irritability
- Sweating
- Feeling anxious
- Headache
- Trouble concentrating

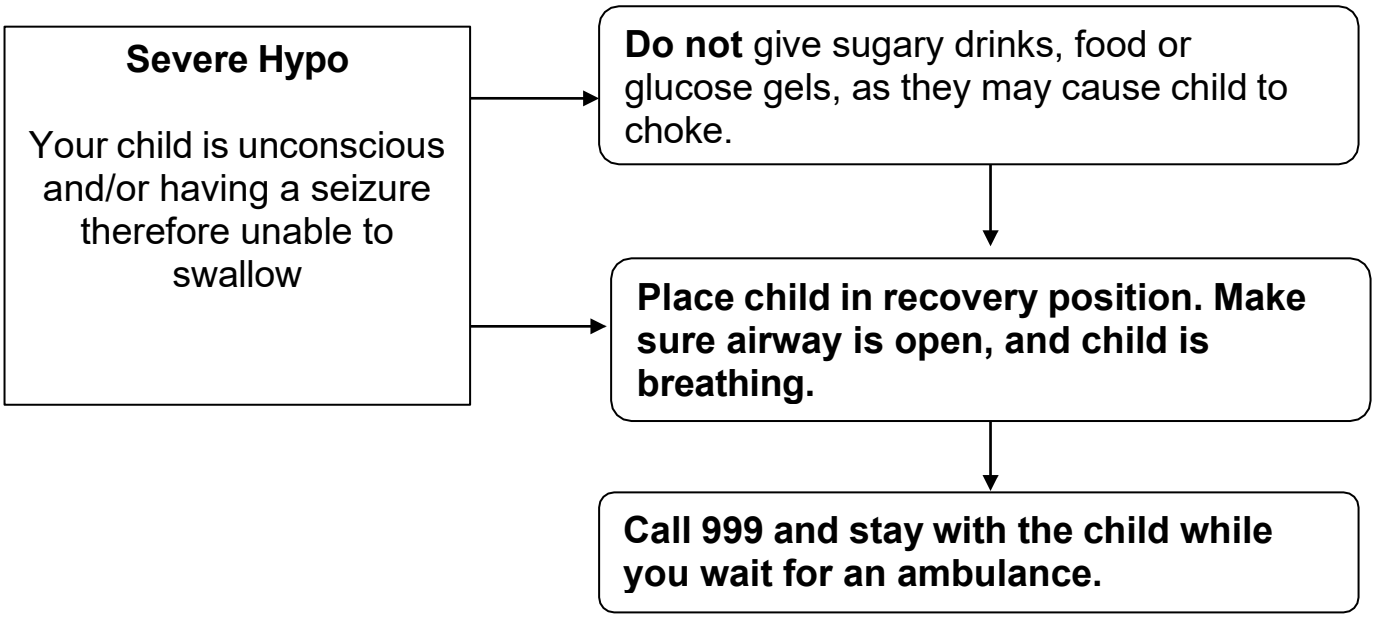
How you might look

During a hypo, you may appear:

- Pale
- Sweaty
- Confused

What to do?


Glucose level under 4mmol/L
Mild Hypo
Your child can eat and drink and is cooperative
Treat with:
10-15g fast acting carbohydrates (Younger children may need less – aim for 0.3g/kg)
3-4 glucose tablets
¾-1 x glucose shot
2-3 teaspoons sugar dissolved in water
100-150mls fruit juice
Retest after 15 min if finger pricking or 20 min if using a glucose sensor
Still below 4?
Repeat
If above 4
After 1 hypo treatment, if your blood glucose is above 4.0mmol/L, 20 to 30 minutes later to make sure it stays above 4.0 mmol/L.
If it takes 2 or more treatments to raise your blood glucose above 4mmol/L, or if you are about to exercise, you may need a 10g slow-release carbohydrate snack to keep your glucose stable, such as 1 plain digestive biscuit or 1 small apple.
If hypo happens just before a mealtime when you usually take insulin, treat the hypo first. Once your blood glucose is above 4.0 mmol/L, take your insulin as usual. Insulin can be reduced if you have had recurrent hypos or are exercising, but do not skip your insulin.
If above 4
Still below 4?
Retest after 15 min
Repeat
Moderate Hypo
Your child is conscious but not cooperative
Treat with 1 dose of glucogel:
Remove cap and slowly squeeze contents into mouth between gum and cheeks.
Massage outer cheek to disperse gel.



Glucagon

Paramedics may give an injection of Glucagon if needed. If you feel confident, you can give this injection yourself, following the instructions on the box.

If you want to see how to give Glucagon, you can watch a video at www.digibete.org.

Precautions and things to keep in mind

- Always carry glucose tablets or another fast-acting hypo treatment, and a starchy snack just in case.
- Wear or carry a diabetes ID bracelet, necklace or card. These are available from Diabetes UK and other suppliers.
- A small number of mild hypos is sometimes unavoidable and can be a normal part of insulin therapy.
- It can help to notice patterns or causes of hypos, so you can try to prevent or reduce them.
- **If you are worried about hypos, speak to a member of your diabetes team**.

More information

This leaflet was produced by the Coventry Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust. If you have any other questions or would like more information, please call 024 7696 6161.

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