



Hypoglycaemia

Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) is the medical term used when the level of glucose in your blood drops too low. Glucose is a sugar in the body, made from the breakdown of carbohydrates found in foods like bread, potatoes and pasta. Glucose is the main source of energy or fuel for the body and importantly the brain.

What causes Hypoglycaemia?

There can be a whole range of causes for hypoglycaemia in babies and young children. Some may cause single episodes of hypoglycaemia such as: sickness and diarrhoea, or another illness which stops your baby eating or drinking enough, or prevents them eating at all. Hypoglycaemia may be caused by an underlying health condition like diabetes, ketotic hypoglycaemia, congenital conditions such as congenital hyperinsulinism, unusual hormone problems or certain medications. These causes will often be identified through a series of tests carried out by medical professionals. Depending on the cause, your baby or child may require on-going support and monitoring from a medical professional or team.

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For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

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Why is Hypoglycaemia serious?

Babies and children need glucose for their developing brains. It can therefore be dangerous if blood glucose levels drop too low and can cause lifelong neurological damage if not treated. It is therefore extremely important to take immediate action to raise the blood glucose to a safe level.

What is a safe blood glucose level?

The recommended safe blood glucose level can vary, depending on a number of factors and the underlying cause of the hypoglycaemia. Routine monitoring of baby and children's blood glucose is not performed in the UK. If you have any concerns about your baby or child's health, then you should contact your health visitor or GP. If your doctor has identified a concern about your baby or child's blood glucose level, it is important to discuss what the safe range is for your baby or child and how this will be measured and monitored.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hypoglycaemia in babies and children?



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF

Hypoglycaemia

IN BABIES AND CHILDREN

- **Feeding issues**
 - *Not waking for feeds*
 - *Not sucking effectively*
 - *Demanding very frequent feeds particularly after a period of eating*
- **Lethargy, difficult to wake, unusually sleepy**
- **Unexplained signs of trembling, shaking, jitteriness**
- **Seizures**
- **Floppiness, poor body tone**
- **Unresponsive, staring**
- **Blue, pale, blotchy skin, lips or tongue**
- **Difficulty in breathing**
 - *You may notice grunting noises or their stomach sucking in under the ribcage*
 - *Breathlessness*
 - *Rapid or laboured breathing*
 - *Shallow breathing*
- **Apnoea**
 - *Whilst sleeping, if they go for more than 20 seconds without breathing*
 - *Gasping for breath after a pause in breathing*
- **Confusion, slurred speech or not making sense**

**Hypoglycaemia with clinical signs is a medical emergency.
Seek URGENT help and call 999**

Children's
HYPERINSULINISM
Charity

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What to do if my baby or child has symptoms of Hypoglycaemia

If the baby or child has a known medical condition or cause for the hypoglycaemia, they will have an emergency care plan that has been individually designed to meet their particular needs and you should follow this.

If your baby or child does not have a plan, and is displaying any of the symptoms as detailed above, then seek medical advice by contacting your health visitor, GP, 111 or 999, see below for guidance.

NHS 111 has provided the following advice:

Call 999 Ambulance	if they are unconscious, difficult to wake or are having a seizure.	Contact GP/ Primary Care	within an hour if they are not behaving normally and are between 29 days and 3 months.
	if they are limp, floppy, unable to stay awake when woken, if they are cold to touch, have a blue colouring or they are having trouble breathing.		within 2 hours for unusual symptoms such as crying for more than an hour.
	if they are not responding normally, have any symptoms of breathing changes such as stopping breathing for 20 seconds or more, grunting or if there are complex seizures.		within 6 hours – if they are under 16 weeks and have less than half the normal feeds within the past 12 hours.

It is always advisable to seek medical advice if you have any concerns about your baby or child.

What are the long-term effects of Hypoglycaemia?

Some babies and children may have neurological consequences, particularly as a result of severe, prolonged, or recurrent hypoglycaemia. It is therefore advisable to be aware of developmental milestones and to raise concerns with your health visitor or GP if your child does not appear to be meeting them, especially those related to speech or motor skills. It is recommended to go along to all health visitor and GP checks/assessments/reviews. If you have any concerns or worries relating to development or health, make sure you bring this to their attention during the appointment. They will offer support, advice and guidance, they will also be able to complete an assessment of your baby or child's developments to see if they are meeting their milestones and will discuss the results and next steps with you.

Family Life

Dealing with medical conditions that cause on-going hypoglycaemia can be exhausting, stressful and frightening. Families often report feeling anxious and overwhelmed, particularly at the time of diagnosis. It is important to look for support and to be aware of your mental and physical health. Rare conditions can feel isolating and scary, but accessing support groups can put you in contact with other families to share experience and form friendships. Your health visitor is available to support you and your family's emotional health and wellbeing too, they can support you and signpost you to additional specialist support if needed. Check your baby or child's Personal Child Health Record (Red Book) for details on how to contact your health visitor.

Suggested Charities and Support groups:

Hyperinsulinism - The Children's Hyperinsulinism Charity: <https://bit.ly/2ERBpMe>

Diabetes - Children with Diabetes UK: <https://bit.ly/2SjrdPP>

Ketotic Hypoglycaemia - Ketotic Hypoglycaemia International - <https://bit.ly/3jpZvwP>

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