

Roundtable Safety Moment

Diabetes

The Danger of High and Low Blood Sugars



Very likely, someone in your unit has diabetes, which can be a life-threatening problem if their blood sugar gets too high or too low.

Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

Strenuous exercise can decrease the blood sugar in all of us, and this is especially true for people with diabetes, for whom low blood sugar, or **hypoglycemia**, can occur suddenly.

Symptoms of low blood sugar might include:

- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness
- Seizures

What to do:

- If the person is conscious: give juice, regular coke, sugar cubes, candies, glucose tablets, or glucose gels.
- If there is no improvement within 15 minutes, seek immediate medical care. Remember that oral treatment should never be attempted if the victim is unconscious because choking could result.

High Blood sugar (Hyperglycemia)

Hyperglycemia—can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA can become severe and require immediate medical treatment.

Symptoms of high blood sugar might include:

- Sleepiness
- Frequent urination
- Lack of energy
- Heavy breathing
- Thirst

- Loss of consciousness



What to do:

- If the person is conscious: give sugar-free fluids such as water, Powerade, and tea
- If a qualified individual is present, insulin can be administered (only administer if you know the correct amount to give)
- If the person is unconscious: immediately transport them to medical care.

Tips for Leaders

- Develop a diabetic action plan with the individual and/or their parents before a Scouting event occurs.
- Know symptoms of low and high blood sugar levels, how to use a glucometer, and when to get medical help.
- Make sure that the Annual Health and Medical Record includes the most current information.
- Plan for each person with diabetes to be paired with a knowledgeable buddy to help if symptoms arise.
- Encourage people with diabetes to check blood sugar as recommended by their doctor and if and when symptoms occur.
- Make sure you have adequate medication and supplies for the entire event before leaving.

RESOURCES

American Diabetes Association—Diabetes Basics	
American Diabetes Association—Diabetes Medical Management Plan	
Mayo Clinic Diabetes	