

Managing your diabetes when taking laxative bowel preparation

Information and advice for patients

Endoscopy

If you have diabetes and need to have a laxative before your colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy test, then you will need to follow these instructions carefully along with the laxative instructions we have sent you.

As preparation for your procedure you cannot eat solid food from the day before the test. Because of this, there is an increased risk that your blood sugar level could become too low (this is hypoglycaemia or a 'hypo'). The enclosed leaflet gives you more detailed information about hypoglycaemia.

You may also have higher blood sugar levels than normal for a couple of days around the time of the test, but they should return to normal after that.

What are the symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

The symptoms of hypoglycaemia include:

- Sweating heavily
- Feeling anxious
- Becoming pale
- Trembling and shaking
- Tingling of the lips
- Hunger
- Palpitations/faster heartbeat

How can I prevent hypoglycaemia?

During the time you are not able to eat solid food you can still have sugary drinks such as:

- Fizzy drinks (not diet or sugar-free)
- Energy drinks, such as Lucozade
- Smooth orange juice (no bits)
- 4 teaspoons of sugar dissolved in 200ml of water

If you feel you are at risk of hypoglycaemia you should aim to have a glass of the above every 2 hours.

What should I do if I have the symptoms of hypoglycaemia?

If you have any of these symptoms, or if you normally test your blood sugar level and it drops below 5mmol/L, you should have one of the treatments below:

- 200mls (a small carton) of smooth orange juice (no bits).
- 60mls Glucojuice or lift

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- 5 Glycotabs
- 6 Dextrose tablets
- 5 Jelly babies

If you take diabetic tablets

On the day before the test

- Take your diabetic tablets as normal, but avoid taking them within an hour of taking Laxative as they may be flushed through your gut without taking effect.
- If you normally check your blood sugar level, check it every 2 hours.
- If your blood sugar level is below 5mmol/L or you have any of the symptoms of hypoglycaemia, have a sugary drink as described earlier.
- Go to bed as normal.

On the day of the test

- Do not take your diabetic tablets before the test.
- If you normally check your blood sugar level, check it every 2 hours.
- If your blood sugar level is below 5mmol/L or you have any of the symptoms hypoglycaemia, have a sugary drink as described earlier.

After the test

- When you start eating normally again, you can start taking your diabetic tablets as normal.
- If you normally check your blood sugar level, check it every 2 hours for the first 4 hours after the test, and then every 4 hours for the next 2 days.
- If you do not normally have to check your blood sugar level, watch out for the symptoms of a hypo and take sugary drinks as necessary.

If you take insulin

On the day before the test

- Once you stop eating solid food on the day before the test, insulin doses should be halved.
- Check your blood sugar level every 2 hours.
- If your blood sugar level is below 5mmol/L or you have any of the symptoms of hypoglycaemia, have a sugary drink as described earlier.
- Go to bed as normal.

On the day of the test

- If you take insulin once a day, take your normal dose.

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- If you take insulin twice a day, take half your morning dose.
- Check your blood sugar level every 2 hours.
- If your blood sugar level is below 5mmol/L or you have any of the symptoms of hypoglycaemia, have a sugary drink as described earlier.

After the test

- When you start eating normally again, you can start taking your insulin as normal.
- Check your blood sugar level every 2 hours for the first 4 hours after the test, and then every 4 hours for the next 2 days.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the diabetes specialist nurses.

0121 507 4570

Monday - Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website

www.swbh.nhs.uk.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

Centre for Perioperative Care (2021). Guideline for perioperative care for people with diabetes mellitus undergoing elective and emergency surgery. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cpoc.org.uk/sites/cpoc/files/documents/2021-03/CPOC-Guideline%20for%20Perioperative%20Care%20for%20People%20with%20Diabetes%20Mellitus%20Undergoing%20Elective%20and%20Emergency%20Surgery.pdf> (Accessed 02 February 2023).

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