

## Healthy Eating for Reactive Hypoglycaemia

*This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice, or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.*

The term 'Reactive hypoglycaemia' is used to describe episodes of low blood glucose levels which typically occur 2 – 4 hours after a meal. It is thought that this is triggered by the over- production of insulin following a meal with a high carbohydrate content.

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas. It transports glucose from the blood to the tissues to produce energy. If too much insulin is produced after a high carbohydrate meal, blood glucose levels can drop too low.

### Common symptoms

- Fatigue
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Sweating
- Irritability or anxiety
- Increased appetite or cravings for sweet foods
- Trembling
- Difficulty concentrating
- Nausea and vomiting
- Blurred vision
- Rapid heart beat

For example: potatoes, pasta, cereal and rice. Spread them throughout the day by having small amounts at each meal.

**Have protein foods at each meal and snack** Good sources of protein include meat and poultry, fish, eggs, beans and lentils, tofu, nuts and dairy foods.

**The following dietary changes may help relieve these symptoms:**

### Ensure a healthy, balanced diet

Include a variety of foods in your diet and aim for 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

Eat small amounts of healthy fats such as olive oil, nuts and seeds.

**Eat five to six small meals or snacks a day** Eat approximately every 3 hours to avoid long gaps between meals.

**Avoid big portions of starchy foods**

**Choose more high fibre low glycaemic foods.**

Add lentils, beans or pulses to meals.  
Use wholegrains such as granary bread and brown rice.

Have more fruit (not fruit juice) and vegetables. Increase your fluid intake when increasing your fibre intake.

See overleaf for more information on the glycaemic index.

**Limit foods high in sugar**

For example: sweets, sweet desserts, jam or honey. Small amounts can be taken occasionally as part of a meal.

**Avoid sugary drinks**

For example: sugary (“non-diet”) fizzy drinks, fruit juice or squash.

Use no-added sugar squash or diet drinks and dilute fruit juice with water.

**Alcohol advice**

Alcohol can lower blood glucose levels. If wished, 1-2 units of alcohol may be taken with, or shortly after, meals. Use diet soft drinks or mixers as above.

**Avoid caffeine if it makes your symptoms worse**

Avoid energy drinks, cola and chocolate. Try decaffeinated tea or coffee and use sweetener in place of sugar.

# Healthy Eating for Reactive Hypoglycaemia

## Low/Medium GI foods

These are carbohydrate-containing foods which are digested more slowly and can therefore help to keep blood glucose levels steady.

### **Bread:**

Multi-grain  
Granary  
Rye  
Wheat Tortillas

### **Cereal:**

Special K (not flavoured)  
Porridge (not Instant)  
All Bran

### **Dairy**

All milk  
Natural yoghurt

### **Fruit:**

Apples  
Apricots  
Banana (not very ripe)  
Cherries  
Grapefruit  
Kiwi fruit  
Mango  
Oranges  
Peaches  
Pears  
Plums  
Strawberries

### **Potato:**

Sweet potato  
Boiled new potatoes

### **Rice/pasta:**

All pasta  
Brown rice, Basmati rice, white long grain rice  
Couscous

### **Vegetables:**

All vegetables  
Peas, beans and lentils  
Avoid re-heating baked beans

You may find keeping a food and symptom diary is useful to identify triggers for your symptoms.

## Meal suggestions

### **Breakfast**

Porridge with nuts and berries or  
Poached egg on wholegrain bread or  
All Bran or  
Grilled bacon and tomatoes on granary toast

### **Lunch**

Soups with beans, peas or lentils or  
Sandwiches made with multigrain bread and lean meat. or  
Chicken salad wrap or  
Omelette with a slice of granary bread

### **Evening meal**

Chilli with brown rice or  
Grilled fish with plenty of vegetables and new potatoes or  
Salmon and noodles with stir-fry vegetables or  
Chicken casserole with new potatoes

### **Snacks**

1 portion of fruit  
1 small pot of yoghurt  
Slices of apple and cheese  
Vegetable sticks and hummus  
2 whole wheat crackers with peanut butter  
1 slice granary toast with low fat spread and cheese or ham or peanut butter  
A handful of nuts  
A handful of cherry tomatoes

### **What should you do if you have a hypoglycaemic episode?**

Eat or drink something that will provide a small amount of fast acting carbohydrates such as:

- 3-4 jelly babies
- a small can of cola
- 200ml of fruit juice from concentrate
- 5 dextrose tablets

Follow this up with a slow acting carbohydrate such as:

- a slice of granary bread
- 1 digestive
- a piece of fruit
- 200ml of milk,