

What do I do if I have a 'hypo' whilst driving?

- 1) Pull over if it is safe to do so, remove the keys from the ignition.
- 2) If possible, move to the passenger side of the vehicle. This is to avoid any suggestion that you may be 'under the influence' of a drug whilst in charge of a vehicle (which is illegal). Providing you are not suffering from side effects from your diabetes medication, i.e. a hypo, it is legal to drive whilst taking it.
- 3) Check your blood glucose level.
- 4) If hypo is confirmed, treat with fast acting carbs such as five jelly babies, glucogel or glucose tablets.
- 5) Wait 15 minutes then check your blood glucose level again.
- 6) If still lower than 4mmol/l, have more fast acting carbs, wait another 15 minutes and then check your blood glucose again.
- 7) When your blood glucose level is above 4mmol/l have a long acting carb, for example, a banana, two plain biscuits or a sandwich.

If you are unable to pull over immediately, start treating the hypo with fast acting carbs (which should be in reach when driving) and pull over when it is safe to do so, ensuring you remove the key from the ignition and move to the passenger side of the vehicle. Then follow the above steps from stage 3.

You will need to wait at least 45 minutes after your blood glucose has reached normal levels before you can drive again.

It is your responsibility to ensure you keep updated with current driving regulations, or you may risk losing your driving license.

Useful websites: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk>
<https://www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving>

This leaflet is only relevant to Group 1 drivers. If you drive a bus, coach or lorry, the guidelines are different. Please refer to the Group 2 drivers leaflet for more details.

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You can request this information in a different format or another language.

Patient Information

Diabetes, Hypoglycaemia, Driving and the DVLA

Group 1 Drivers
Car and Motorbike



Diabetes should not interfere with your ability to drive but you do need to plan in advance before driving.

What is hypoglycaemia (hypos)?

Hypos are episodes when your blood glucose is too low (less than 4mmol/l). Hypos can increase your risk of having an accident. If you have an accident and are hypoglycaemic then you could lose your license.

Low blood glucose (less than 3mmol/m) can affect brain function and cause more severe symptoms. If left untreated, low blood glucose may lead to loss of consciousness.

Symptoms of hypoglycaemia and low blood sugar include:

- Hunger
- Sweating
- Anxiety
- Palpitations
- Tremor/shakiness
- Tingling lips
- Slurred speech
- Disorientation/confusion
- Irrational behaviour
- Difficulty concentrating
- Blurred vision

The DVLA will expect you to be able to explain what a hypoglycaemic event is and how to treat it. Make sure you know your warning signs.

Hypo Unawareness

The signs of your hypos may change over time, this is known as **Modified Hypoglycaemic Awareness**, it makes it hard to spot a hypo. Familiar early symptoms, e.g. sweating, palpitations and nausea, may happen at the same time as more severe signs affecting your ability to concentrate causing blurred vision, slurred speech and seizures.

If your warning signs have changed and it's harder for you to identify the signs of a hypo, **you must discuss this with your diabetes team.**

Third Party Assistance and Severe Hypoglycaemic Episodes

If you need help by another person (third party assistance) when you have a hypo, this is known as a **Severe Hypoglycaemic Episode**. If this happens to you, you must contact your diabetes team who will review your medication.

Diabetes and the DVLA - Group 1 Drivers

By law it is your responsibility to inform the DVLA if you take medications that can cause hypoglycaemia.

- If you are taking insulin you will need to inform the DVLA. A medical questionnaire (DIAB1i) will need to be completed. You can download this from www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving
- If you are taking insulin on a temporary basis (no longer than three months) then you will not have to contact the DVLA i.e. after a heart attack, on a research trial, or due to gestational diabetes.
- If you have a severe hypoglycaemic episode (currently legislation includes night-time hypos which require third party assistance) or develop modified hypoglycaemic awareness, you must contact the DVLA.
- If your diabetes is diet controlled, you take oral medication or non-insulin injections then you do not have to inform the DVLA. Please note, some oral medications may increase the risk of hypos.

No matter how your diabetes is treated, you must by law inform your insurance company that you have diabetes.

Precautions to Take Before Driving

- Always test your blood glucose 30 minutes before you drive. If it is below 5mmol/l you will need to have a snack before driving.
- Always carry your meter on you when you are driving - make sure that the time and date is correct.
- Always have your medication and plenty of treatment for a hypo within easy reach in the car. Make sure you have both:
 - Fast acting carbs: Jelly babies, glucose tablets, sugary drink.
 - Long acting carbs: Biscuit, cereal bar, sandwich, fruit.
- Always check your blood glucose **every** two hours when driving.
- Always check your blood glucose if you have an accident - even if you feel it was not your fault, it can be used to demonstrate you did not have a hypo at the wheel.