

## **Reactive Hypoglycemia after Bariatric Surgery**

### **What is reactive hypoglycemia?**

After bariatric surgery you may experience reactive hypoglycemia:

- Hypoglycemia means low blood sugar
- Reactive hypoglycemia is having low blood sugar after eating a meal or snack

This may happen after eating foods that are high in sugar or simple carbohydrates. It is thought to be related to dumping syndrome.

### **How do I know if I have reactive hypoglycemia?**

You have reactive if you have:

- any symptoms listed below a few hours after having a meal or snack **and**
- these symptoms go away after eating and drinking

### **What are the symptoms of reactive hypoglycemia?**

You may feel one or more of these:

- hungry
- shaky
- dizzy
- sweaty
- sleepy
- anxious
- weak
- confused

### **What should I do if I think I have reactive hypoglycemia after having a meal or snack?**

Having low blood sugar is not good for your overall health and can be life-threatening.

- If you think you have reactive hypoglycemia, check your blood sugar.
- If your blood sugar is less than 4mmol/L, you need to treat it to bring your sugar above 4mmol/L. Follow the steps on the next page.

If you do not have a meter, talk to your family doctor, health care provider, or diabetes educator to get a meter.

### **When your blood sugar is less than 4mmol/L:**

1. Take 15 grams of a fast acting carbohydrate right away. This will raise your blood sugar quickly. Examples of fast-acting carbohydrate include:
  - Chewing 3 to 4 dextrose or glucose tablets (read the label) OR
  - Drinking  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (175mL) of juice
2. Wait 15 minutes and check your blood sugar again.

3. If your blood sugar is still below 4mmol/L treat again with one of the fast acting carbohydrates listed above.
4. Repeat these steps until your blood sugar is above 4mmol/L
5. If your next meal or snack is more than 1 hour away, **you need to have a snack that contains carbohydrate and protein that fits into the stage of your diet you are at.** Examples of snacks are listed below.

You may feel like eating sweet foods like cookies, cake, and candy. Even though these foods are high in sugar and can raise your blood sugar, your blood sugar will go too high too fast which is not safe. This can lead to another low blood sugar because too much insulin is released.

### **How can I prevent reactive hypoglycemia?**

You can help prevent hypoglycemia by following your diet guidelines for bariatric surgery:

- eat 3 healthy meals and 2 healthy snacks each day
- space meals and snacks 2 to 3 hours apart
- eat protein at each meal and snack time
- avoid skipping meals and snacks
- avoid or limit alcohol depending on what stage of diet you are at
- avoid or limit caffeine depending on what stage of diet you are at
- avoid sweets like cookies, cakes, candy, pop, juice, and sweet drinks

Instead of sugars and simple carbohydrates, eat complex carbohydrates because they release less sugar over a longer period of time. Having a complex carbohydrate with protein will slow this release even more.

**Try putting any of these together when they fit the stage of bariatric diet you are at:**

#### **Complex Carbohydrate**

- whole wheat crackers
- whole wheat bread
- whole wheat pita
- whole grain rice
- potatoes
- cereal

#### **Protein**

- nuts
- cheese
- meat
- lentils
- peanut butter
- eggs
- yogurt

**Here are some snack ideas to have after treating a low blood sugar:**

- crackers and cheese
- pita and hummus
- nuts and yogurt
- melba toast and peanut butter