

Diabetes is a condition, where the body's blood sugar level is not regulated. The Pancreas produces a hormone called Insulin, which controls the blood sugar level.

Diabetics need to monitor and regulate the amount of sugar that is in their body. This can be controlled by medication either tablet or injection, or in some cases by diet. Many Diabetics wear a Medical Alert bracelet, necklace, tattoo, or carry a warning card. They may also carry sugar, lollies or glucose in their pockets or bag.

## There are two types of Diabetic Emergencies:

1. Low Blood Sugar Level – Hypoglycaemia. The pancreas over produces insulin or the regulation of the insulin is irregular.
  2. High Blood Sugar Level – Hyperglycaemia. The pancreas does not produce enough insulin.
- Diabetes can occur at any age and can affect people from all lifestyles.
  - Diabetes can be hereditary.
  - A Diabetic Emergency usually occurs because of Low Blood Sugar Level. (hypoglycaemia)

## Hyperglycaemia (Low Blood Sugar Level):

Hypoglycaemia occurs when there is too little sugar (glucose) in the blood. When the blood sugar level falls below the normal level, the functioning of the brain can be altered.

- Overdose of insulin
- Insufficient food
- Exercise
- Alcohol

## Signs and symptoms may include:

- Confusion
- Irritable or unusual behaviour
- Pale/sweating skin
- Nausea headache or dizziness
- Shaking or trembling
- Numbness around the lips or fingers.
- May become unconscious and possibly start fitting.

## NOTE:

The onset of Hypoglycaemia or low blood sugar level is RAPID.

For more information on Diabetes please contact the following Internet sites:

Diabetes NSW: [www.diabetesnsw.com.au](http://www.diabetesnsw.com.au)

Diabetes Australia: [www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au)

If an Ambulance is required - call immediately - do not delay

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## Treatment:

Follow the **Basic First Aid Plan** to assess the casualty

- ✓ Give high-energy foods or sugar.
- ✓ Only give food if the casualty is conscious.
- ✓ If medical aid is delayed give sugar every 15 minutes.
- ✓ The casualty will recover quickly if low blood sugar level is the cause.
- ✓ Always check for a medical alert bracelet, necklace, tattoo or card.
- ✓ If the casualty is unconscious place them onto their side.

**It is dangerous to give a semi-conscious or unconscious casualty food or drink.**

**Diet type drinks or sugar free drinks are unsuitable, as they do not contain sugar.**



## Hyperglycaemia / High Blood Sugar Level:

Hyperglycaemia occurs when there is too much sugar (glucose) in the blood. If left uncontrolled, it may cause the casualty to become unconscious. This condition is a life-threatening situation.

## Causes:

- Infection in the pancreas.
- Insufficient insulin
- Uncontrollable
- Stress
- Too little exercise.
- Eating more carbohydrates than normal.

## Signs and Symptoms may include

- Excessive thirst
- Confusion
- Rapid pulse
- Warm dry skin
- Frequent urination
- Breath may smell sweet, wine-like.

## NOTE:

The onset of Hyperglycaemia or high blood sugar level is SLOW.

## Treatment:

Follow the **Basic First Aid Plan** to assess the casualty.

- ✓ The casualty needs urgent medical advice .
- ✓ Allow casualty to self-administer their insulin.
- ✓ If thirsty give sugar free drinks, water is best.

**Giving a diabetic too much sugar will not cause further problems**

*As a First Aider, you are not permitted to administer the casualty's insulin*

**If an Ambulance is required - call immediately - do not delay**

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