

Hyperglycemia

You have diabetes, which means you have to deal with some of the problems that go along with having the disease. One of those problems is hyperglycemia. Hyperglycemia happens from time to time to all people who have diabetes.

Hyperglycemia can be a serious problem if you don't treat it. Hyperglycemia is a major cause of many of the complications that happen to people who have diabetes. For this reason, it's important to know what hyperglycemia is, what its symptoms are, and how to treat it.

Hyperglycemia is the technical term for high blood glucose (sugar). High blood glucose happens when the body has too little, or not enough, insulin or when body can't use insulin properly.

A number of things can cause hyperglycemia. For example, if you have Type 1 diabetes, you may not have given yourself enough insulin. If you have Type 2 diabetes, your body may have enough insulin, but it is not as effective as it should be.

The problem could be that you ate more than planned or exercised less than planned. The stress of an illness, such as a cold or flu, could also be the cause. Other stresses, such as family conflicts or school or dating problems, could also cause hyperglycemia.

What are the symptoms of hyperglycemia?

The signs and symptoms include: high blood glucose, high levels of sugar in the urine, frequent urination, and increased thirst.

Part of managing your diabetes is checking your blood glucose often. Ask your doctor how often you should check and what your blood glucose levels should be. Checking your blood and then treating high blood glucose early will help you avoid the other symptoms of hyperglycemia.

It's important to treat hyperglycemia as soon as you detect it. If you fail to treat hyperglycemia, a condition called ketoacidosis (diabetic coma) could occur. Ketoacidosis develops when your body doesn't have enough insulin. Without insulin, your body can't use glucose for fuel. So, your body breaks down fats to use for energy.

When your body breaks down fats, waste products called ketones are produced. Your body cannot tolerate large amounts of ketones and will try to get rid of them through the urine. Unfortunately, the body cannot release all the ketones and they build up in your blood. This can lead to ketoacidosis.

Ketoacidosis is life-threatening and needs immediate treatment. Symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Breath that smells fruity
- Nausea and vomiting
- A very dry mouth
- Talk to your doctor about how to handle this condition.

How do you treat hyperglycemia?

Often, you can lower your blood glucose level by exercising. However, if your blood glucose is above 240 mg/dl, check your urine for ketones. If you have ketones, do NOT exercise.

Exercising when ketones are present may make your blood glucose level go even higher. You'll need to work with your doctor to find the safest way for you to lower your blood glucose level.

Cutting down on the amount of food you eat might also help. Work with your dietitian to make changes in your meal plan. If exercise and changes in your diet don't work, your doctor may change the amount of your medication or insulin or possibly the timing of when you take it.

How do you prevent hyperglycemia?

Your best bet is to practice good diabetes management. The trick is learning to detect and treat hyperglycemia early – before it can get worse.

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