



Diabetes Fact Sheets - Arabic, Chinese, English -

Healthy Eating for Diabetes	1
Looking after Diabetes	11
Blood Glucose Monitoring	12
Hypoglycaemia	13
Diabetes and your Feet	16
Sick Days	17

N.B. The Arabic and Chinese nutrition sections have been tailored to match the dietary needs of those groups. Each has its own English text.

Project managed by:
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service
Text supplied by Diabetes Australia - NSW



Healthy Eating For Diabetes - Arabic Version -

WHY IS HEALTHY EATING IMPORTANT?

For a person with diabetes to remain healthy, the most important thing is to keep the blood glucose level as near to normal as possible. This can be achieved by following a healthy eating plan, undertaking regular exercise and taking insulin and/or tablets if required.

Many overweight people who develop diabetes in middle age may be able to control their blood glucose level by reducing their weight.

From time to time you may need alterations to your eating plan, therefore it is important to have regular reviews with your doctor and dietitian.

The basis of traditional Middle Eastern food habits is suitable for people with diabetes as it is based on plenty of vegetables, grains, pulses, fruit and nuts and only small amounts of meat and meat products. The use of processed and convenience food is limited and so maintaining traditional food habits can help manage diabetes.

When people migrate to Australia, they are faced with many new foods and Western food habits. Many people adopt a combination of traditional and Western food habits. This often means an increase in meat and meat products, processed and convenience foods and high fat/sugar snack foods. It usually also means a decrease in healthy food choices such as fruit, vegetables and cereals. These changes in food habits can lead to health problems.

For people with diabetes, it is best to combine the best food choices from both traditional and Western food habits to help manage their diabetes.

A good eating pattern for a person with diabetes will:

- contain mostly high fibre carbohydrate foods – eg wholegrain breads and cereals, vegetables and fruit
- be low in fat
- provide adequate protein for good health



Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

Food provides the body with carbohydrate (including fibre), fat and protein.

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrate foods include bread, potatoes, pasta, cereals, flour, rice, dried beans and lentils. It is best to select wholemeal or wholegrain variety. Other carbohydrate foods are fruit, milk and milk products (eg yoghurt).

These foods are broken down to release glucose (sugar). They are the best food for your body as they provide energy, vitamins and minerals, which your body needs regularly.

Carbohydrate foods are needed in regular amounts spread out evenly over the day to keep blood glucose levels controlled.

Sugars are also carbohydrate foods. These include sugars naturally occurring in fruit and milk as well as table sugar (sucrose) both white and raw, jam, honey, glucose, syrup, sweet cakes and biscuits, soft drinks and cordials, lollies and chocolate.

Food containing small amounts of sugars eg cereals, plain biscuits, plain cake, and a thin scrape of honey or jam on bread can be included in a healthy eating plan. However it is best to avoid foods which are high in sugar eg soft drink, cordials and lollies and especially those which contain fat eg chocolate, pastries, rich cakes and short-bread biscuits.

FIBRE

Fibre is another component of carbohydrate foods. It is essential as it helps to prevent constipation, satisfies your hunger and in some cases helps control your blood glucose level by slowing the absorption of the glucose.

High fibre foods are wholemeal flour, wholemeal/wholegrain breads and cereals, brown rice legumes (eg dried beans and lentils), whole fruit (not juices) and vegetables.



Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.



Healthy Eating for Diabetes

- Arabic Version -

FATS

- Fat provides more energy than any other food so it is important to use only small amounts.
- Some examples of fat are oil (including olive, canola and blended vegetable oil), butter, margarine, cream, lard and ghee. Fat is also found in meats and meat products (eg sausages), dairy products and in nuts, seeds, olives and avocado. Many snack and takeaway foods are also high in fat.
- While all types of fat can lead to weight gain if you eat too much, some fats are better for your heart than others. There are two types of fat, saturated fats (also called animal fats) and polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats (also called vegetable fats).
- Saturated fats such as butter, ghee and fatty meats can raise your blood fat (cholesterol) levels so you should try to cut down on these fats.
- Vegetable fats such as olive oil, corn oil and margarine will not affect your blood fat (cholesterol) levels, but remember to use only small amounts of these. Note that not all blended vegetable oils are polyunsaturated so you need to check the type of fat used.
- A healthy eating plan including low fat food choices is recommended to control your weight, your diabetes and reduce your risk of heart disease.





Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

Ways to cut down on fat include:

- Use less oil when preparing and cooking foods:
Instead of frying, try low fat cooking methods such as grilling, barbequing and using a non-stick pan.
Use less oil/fats in stews and casseroles, salads, dips and side dishes eg. Tabouleh, zaatar, tahini, hommus, baba gannouj, bean dishes, pilaf, vegetable dishes and sauces.
- Before cooking, trim visible fat from meats such as lamb and beef and remove the skin from chicken.
Eat smaller amounts of meat and chicken and eat more fish (not fried).
Use lean mince when making kibbi and koftah.
Try using less oil to fry foods such as felafel and vegetables.
- Choose low fat dairy foods:
Make yogurt and labneh from low fat or skim milk or buy low fat natural /fruit flavoured yoghurts.
Use smaller amounts of fetta cheese.
Try low fat cheeses such as ricotta and cottage cheese.
- Limit foods high in hidden fats such as cakes, shortbreads, chocolate, pastries, crisps, and coconut based sweets.
- Use only small quantities of nuts, seeds and olives.

PROTEIN

Protein is necessary for your body every day.

Choose small serves of protein as excess is changed into body fat.

Foods which are good sources of protein include lean meat, fish, skinless chicken, eggs, low fat cheese and milk, dried beans, lentils and soy beans.



Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

What can I eat if I am still hungry?

Some foods and drinks can be taken without affecting your blood glucose level or body weight and are called "**free**", which means you may have them as much as you like.

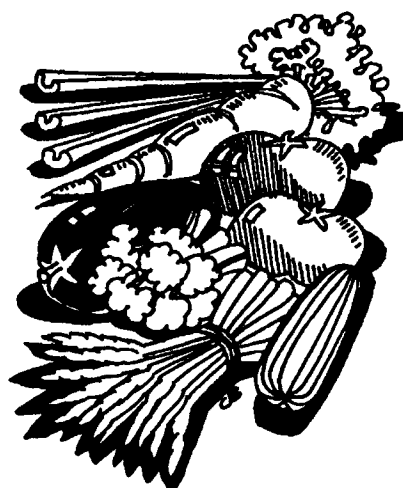
Free drinks:

- Tea
- Coffee
- Soda water
- Mineral water - plain, unflavoured
- Low joule/cal soft drinks
- Low joule/cal cordials
- Clear soups (consommé)
- Fresh lemon juice
- Low joule/cal jelly



"Free" vegetables:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| • Asparagus | • Garlic |
| • Bean | • Gherkins |
| • Broccoli | • Green Peas |
| • Brussels Sprouts | • Kale |
| • Cabbage | • Leeks |
| • Capsicum | • Lettuce |
| • Carrots | • Marrow |
| • Cauliflower | • Mushrooms |
| • Celery | • Okra |
| • Chicory | • Onions |
| • Chillies | • Pumpkin |
| • Chives | • Radishes |
| • Choko | • Shallots |
| • Cucumber | • Silverbeet |
| • Dill Pickles | • Spinach |
| • Eggplant | • Tomatoes |
| • Endive | • Watercress |
| • Fennel | • Zucchini |





Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

Also included on the free list:

- Herbs and spices - garlic, chives, herbs (eg. coriander, mint, parsley, oregano or basil) or spices (eg. cumin, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, pepper or curry)
- Low joule jams
- Low joule dressings
- Vinegar (all varieties)
- Artificial Sweeteners eg. Saccharine, Sugarine, Sucaryl, Hermesetes, Equal, Nutrasweet, Splenda.

If you are often hungry after meals, speak to your dietitian about which foods are best to satisfy your appetite



Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Too much alcohol is harmful for everyone. If you drink alcohol, it is recommended that you limit your alcohol intake to 1-2 standard drinks per day and to include at least 2 alcohol free days per week. A standard drink is:

1 middie (285mL) of regular beer

OR

2 middies (285mL) of low alcohol beer

OR

120mL table wine

OR

60mL fortified wine (for example port/sherry)

OR

30mL spirits or liqueurs

If you drink alcohol and you are taking insulin or tablets for your diabetes, you are at more risk of having a sudden drop in your blood sugar levels (called a hypo). To prevent hypos, alcohol should be taken with meals or some carbohydrate food.

Remember:

- All alcoholic drinks are high in energy (kilojoule) content
- Low **alcohol** beers are preferable to regular beers or diet ale because they are lower in alcohol content
- When mixing drinks use low joule mixers (eg. Diet soft drink, soda water)

What if I drink too much alcohol?

You could:

- Become overweight
- Damage your health
- Cause poor control of your diabetes

Note: Some people with diabetes on tablets experience an unpleasant flushing sensation when they drink alcohol.



Healthy Eating for Diabetes

- Arabic Version -

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To help you develop a healthy eating plan remember:

- Eat meals and snacks at regular times throughout the day, especially if you take insulin or tablets.
- Base your meals on high fibre, carbohydrate foods such as bread, cereals, legumes and fruit.
- Try to eat a similar amount of carbohydrate food at each meal, do not save carbohydrate from one meal to increase the next meal.
- Use fats and oils in very small amounts and choose low fat foods where possible.
- Small amounts of sugar can be included in a healthy eating plan for diabetes. It is best to include it as part of a low fat, high fibre meal or snack.
- Avoid/limit your intake of foods high in added sugar (eg lollies, soft drinks) and especially those high in fat and sugar (eg. chocolates, pastries, shortbreads and cakes).



Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

CHOOSING CARBOHYDRATE FOODS

Choose from a variety of carbohydrate foods at meals and snacks. Aim to include high fibre, low fat foods at each meal. Try to include at least 2-3 serves of carbohydrate at each meal.

You may exchange one carbohydrate food for another from the list below.

- ¼ large Lebanese bread or 1 slice of multigrain bread
- ½ cup of cooked rice (long grain variety) or pasta
- ⅓ cup cooked barley or bulgur
- ¾ cup cooked lentils
- ⅔ cup cooked legumes, beans or pulses
- 2 plain biscuits (eg Full-o-Fruit or Shredded Wheatmeal)
- 4 Cracker biscuits eg Vita Weat, Cruskits
- ½ cup prepared breakfast cereal, eg All Bran, Guardian, 2 Weet Bix (Oatbran)
- 1 medium potato
- ½ cup sweet corn
- 1 piece of fruit, eg 1 apple, 1 small banana, 1 cup of grapes, 1/3 medium rockmelon, 4 apricots, 2 dried figs, 4 dates, 1½ cups watermelon, 1 peach, 1 mango or 20g mixed dried fruit
- 150ml 100% fruit juice
- 300ml low fat milk
- 250g (small carton) skim/low fat natural yoghurt
- 1 large scoop low fat ice cream



Healthy Eating for Diabetes - Arabic Version -

SUGGESTED MEAL PLANS

Remember this is only a guide. It is best for you to see a dietitian at your local hospital or community health centre to have an individual meal plan developed for you.

Breakfast

1 Lebanese bread*
1 egg or cheese
olives
fruit jam
salad vegetables

OR

Breakfast

Breakfast cereal (high fibre)*
low fat milk*
1 fruit*

Snack

2 plain biscuits*

OR

Snack

1 fruit*

Light Meal

1 Lebanese bread* filled with
small serve protein* and
salad vegetables
1 serving of fruit*

OR

Light Meal

2 slices bread*
soup
(vegetable/lentil*/bean*/burghul*)
1 fruit*
salad eg tabouleh

Snack

dried fruit*

OR

Snack

yoghurt*

Main Meal

thin soup if desired
medium serve protein*
vegetable based dish
salad
½ Lebanese bread*
1 serving of fruit*

OR

Main Meal

medium serve protein*
free vegetables
green salad
½ cup rice*
½ Lebanese bread*
yoghurt*

Supper

2 plain biscuits*

OR

Supper

1 fruit*

* These carbohydrate foods can be exchanged for any food listed on the **previous page**

See page 4 for examples of protein foods

LOOKING AFTER DIABETES

When you have diabetes, your doctor should arrange a variety of tests to assess your health. Over time, poorly controlled diabetes can cause damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves and blood vessels. Annual checks by your doctor are the most effective way of detecting the development of complications and with prompt treatment, a great deal can be done to prevent the damage from getting worse.

Tests your doctor needs to do:

1. **Blood pressure** to be repeated at every routine visit
A check by your doctor for signs of general health problems.
2. **Weight** to be repeated at every routine visit
A check by your doctor to ensure any weight problems is picked up early.
3. **Foot examination** to be repeated every six months
A check by your doctor for signs of ulcers, infections or abnormalities. If these exist, see a podiatrist!
4. **A special blood test called HbA1c** to be repeated every 6-12 months
A test, which your doctor will arrange to assess your overall blood glucose control.
5. **Cholesterol/triglycerides test** to be repeated every 12 months
A blood test, which your doctor will arrange to check your blood fats.
6. **Kidney test** to be repeated every 12 months
A test which your doctor will arrange to check for early signs of diabetic kidney problems. For this, urine is tested.
7. **Eye examination** to be repeated every 12-24 months
An examination by an eye specialist (referred by your doctor) or an optometrist to check for damage to blood vessels in the back of the eye.

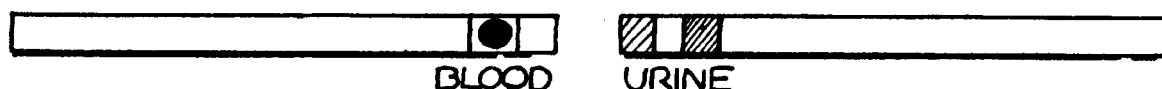
Remember good control of diabetes will lessen your chances of developing the complications of diabetes. You can help to avoid or delay complications by:

- Eating sensibly. Eat mostly carbohydrate foods like fruit, vegetables, legumes, breads and cereals and less fatty foods.
- Doing some regular physical activity.
- Not smoking - smoking causes narrowing of the blood vessels which can cause further damage.
- Checking your feet every day.

The team approach to managing diabetes (you, your family and medical/health professionals) is the best way to help you achieve good control of your diabetes.

Blood Glucose Monitoring

The aim of diabetes management is to keep your blood glucose (sugar) levels in the normal range (4-8mmol/L) or as close to this range as possible. By regularly testing your blood glucose (sugar) levels, you and your doctor can keep a check on your diabetes control.



Testing blood glucose levels at home

An accurate way of assessing your diabetes control is by a simple blood test you can do at home. All insulin treated people and most of those not receiving insulin should seek medical instruction from a diabetes educator or doctor to learn the correct procedure to measure their own blood glucose (sugar) level.

The most common form of blood glucose monitoring is by using a blood glucose meter. To use this you need to obtain a drop of blood from your finger and put it on a specially treated test strip. This strip is then inserted into the meter to obtain your blood glucose level. There are a variety of meters available and it is important that you are properly trained in the correct use of whichever meter you choose. Remember to record your results in a diary so you can monitor your blood glucose levels over time.



Useful times to test

1. First thing in the morning before breakfast - your blood glucose should be at its lowest level.
2. Two hours after a meal - blood glucose has risen as a result of eating.
3. Before a meal - blood glucose is not as low as a fasting level.
4. During the night if you having been experiencing:
 - Night sweats
 - Morning headaches
 - Unexplainable higher than usual morning readings or low evening readings

Remember you should also check your blood glucose levels if:

- You are unwell.
- You experience symptoms of a high blood glucose level.
- You suspect that you might have a low blood glucose level.

HYPOGLYCAEMIA

If a person with diabetes' blood glucose level falls below normal (below 4mmol/l), a condition called hypoglycaemia results. This is also known as a "hypo". **It only occurs if tablets for diabetes or insulin are part of your treatment.** (People on "diet-only" treatment are not at risk of hypoglycaemia.)

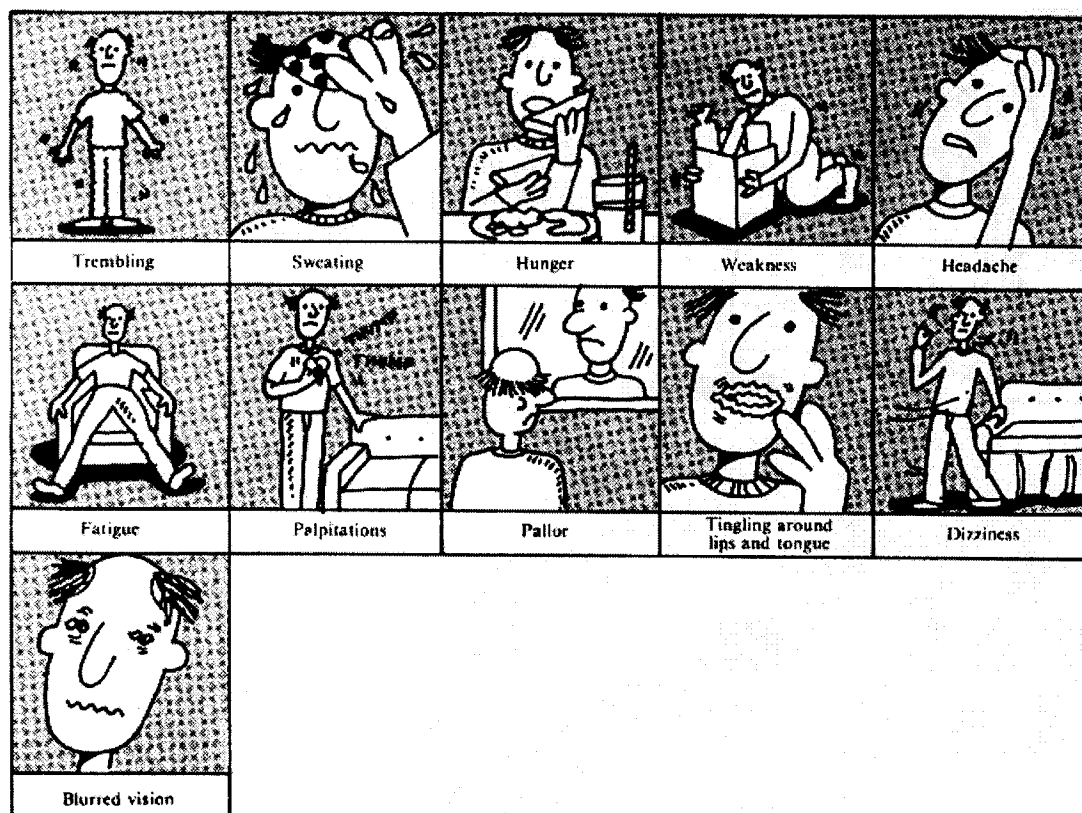
How to recognise a hypo

Symptoms vary but most commonly people notice some of the following:

- Trembling
- Sweating
- Rapid heart beat and pallor

If the hypo is not treated, the symptoms may become worse and lead to:

- Confusion
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Behaviour changes, such as aggressiveness, irritability, crying
- Staggering as if drunk.
- Unconsciousness



HYPOGLYCAEMIA

Possible Causes of a Hypo

- Too much medication
- Too much or unexpected exercise
- Delayed meal or snack
- Not enough carbohydrate food eaten

What to do if you have a hypo

1. Take some sugar or a sweet drink immediately, for example:

Three teaspoons of sugar, honey or glucose

OR

Half a cup of ordinary soft drink (not diabetic or low calorie)

OR

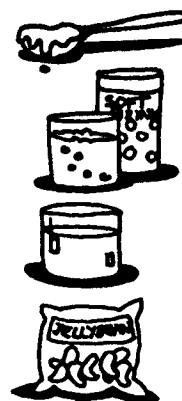
Half a glass of fruit juice

OR

About seven soft sweets eg "jelly beans"

OR

3-5 Glucose tablets (available from a chemist)



NOTE: If taking *Glucobay* tablets as well as the tablets which cause hypoglycaemia, remember to use glucose, glucose gel or glucose based jelly beans to treat hypoglycaemia as *Glucobay* will delay the action of the other forms of sugar.

2. Follow this with carbohydrate food eg:

1 fruit

or

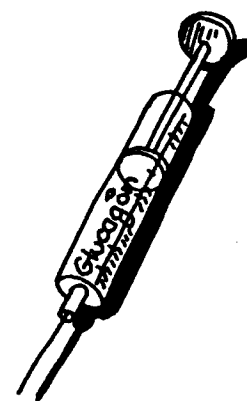
2 plain biscuits

or

1 slice of bread

If it is time for your next meal or snack, eat this immediately.

NOTE: Hypoglycaemia must be treated quickly or you could become unconscious.



HYPOGLYCAEMIA

How to prevent hypos

1. Take your correct dose of insulin or tablets every day.
2. Never miss meals or snacks, eat on time and have all recommended carbohydrate food.
3. If you have an upset stomach, take your insulin/tablets, sip sugary fluid and contact your doctor or diabetes educator.
4. Before strenuous activity, eat extra carbohydrate food.
5. When drinking alcohol, eat some carbohydrate food to reduce the risk of a hypo.

Note: Excessive intake of alcohol is dangerous to everyone but especially to people with diabetes.

6. If your blood glucose level is below 4 mmol/L treat as a hypo.

Some precautions

- If you are taking insulin or tablets, always carry sweets, eg jelly beans and eat them at the first sign of a hypo.
- Explain hypos to relatives, friends, workmates and teachers so they will know how to help you.
- Record your hypos and the times they occur and discuss them with your doctor, diabetes educator or dietitian.
- Wear some form of identification.

DIABETES AND YOUR FEET

Diabetes can affect the blood supply to your feet. The nerves can be damaged and you may not feel any injury to your feet. Poor blood supply and nerve damage can lead to foot problems. You can reduce your risk of foot problems with good foot care.

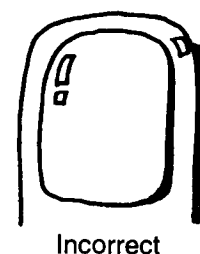
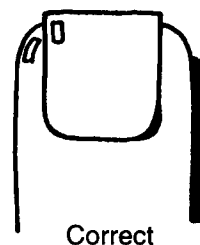
TIPS TO HELP YOU LOOK AFTER YOUR FEET

Protect your feet

- Examine your feet each day. If you are unable to see the bottom of your feet, use a mirror held under your feet to help you.
- Wear shoes and socks that fit well.
- Don't put your feet next to hot water bottles or heaters.
- Don't sit with your legs crossed.
- Stop smoking.

Foot care

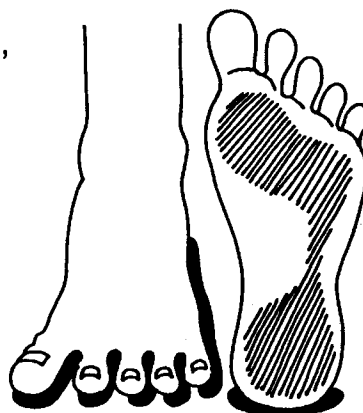
- Wash feet every day using warm water and soap.
- Dry your feet gently especially between the toes.
- Rub moisturising cream on your feet to prevent dryness and cracking.
- Don't cut your toenails too short.
- Do not use corn plasters.
- A podiatrist is a foot expert. They can help if you have a corn or callus.
- Foot ulcers may not hurt but they are still serious.



First Aid

If you have a small skin break:

- Gently wash and dry the foot.
- Cover with a clean non-stick dressing.
- Look at your feet every day. If the sore is red, swollen or there is any discharge, go to the doctor immediately.



SICK DAYS

When you have diabetes, everyday illnesses can affect your diabetes control. Illness or infection will nearly always cause a rise in blood glucose levels so **it is very important to never stop taking your tablets or insulin or reduce the dose even if you feel unable to eat your normal meal.**

If you do feel nauseated and do not wish to eat, it is important to have extra fluid at this time. For those on diabetes tablets or those taking insulin it is especially important to ensure that you have some form of carbohydrate as well. To replace carbohydrates, sip a little ordinary lemonade or sweetened fruit juice (1/2 a cup) every 20 to 30 minutes or 2-3 teaspoons of sugar dissolved in water. This should prevent hypoglycaemia.

You can also try tea or coffee with 2-3 teaspoons of sugar or honey or a small serving of ice cream, ordinary jelly or tinned fruit or 2-3 plain biscuits, such as Shredded Wheatmeal.

What you should do:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Test your blood glucose more regularly.
- If you have fever, aches or pain, take panadol for relief.
- If you have Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM) check your urine for ketones regularly.
- Drink plenty of fluids eg water or low joule soft drinks.

Testing your blood glucose levels frequently will help you to decide whether you need low joule or normal soft drinks according to how high your blood glucose levels are.

When should you see your doctor:

- If you experience symptoms of high blood glucose (Hyperglycaemia), eg feeling very tired, thirsty, or pass large quantities of urine.
- If you experience repeated vomiting or diarrhoea.
- If you detect signs of infection, eg redness, swelling or discharge from a wound.
- If your usual pain killers do not work.
- If you have a fever for more than 24 hours.
- If you have IDDM and show ketones in your urine.
- If your blood glucose level remains elevated for 24 hours.
- If you have any doubts