



GUIDE



Driving Guidelines for people with diabetes



**The Ottawa
Hospital** | **L'Hôpital
d'Ottawa**



Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified health-care provider. Please consult your health-care provider who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.

DDU 41 (07/2017)

Printed at The Ottawa Hospital

People with diabetes who drive must take added precautions, especially if they are on insulin or medication that can cause low blood sugar.

Before driving ask yourself: “Am I well enough to be driving safely?”

Diabetes, like many other health conditions, can affect a person’s ability to drive safely. If you are driving, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are well enough to drive safely every time you get behind the wheel of a vehicle. Driving when diabetes is not controlled is a danger to yourself and others on the roads. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I see my doctor regularly?

All drivers with diabetes should have a medical exam to assess that they are safe to drive at least every 2 years. This exam should include a review of: your blood sugar control, how often you have low blood sugars, your ability to feel low blood sugars, and any complications you may have that would make it unsafe for you to drive. Ask your doctor how often you should be seen and stick to that schedule.

2. When should I not be driving?

You **must not drive** if your blood sugar is **less than 4 mmol/L**. If you have a low blood sugar level, you should **take fast-acting sugar to get your blood sugar level higher than 5 mmol/L and wait to see that your sugar is not low for at least 45 minutes before driving.**

If your blood sugar is **between 4 and 5 mmol/L** eat a **snack with at least 15g of carbohydrates** before you drive to prevent a low blood sugar while driving.

3. Do I know the symptoms of low blood sugars?

Know the symptoms and be prepared to treat a low blood sugar.

Note: the back of this pamphlet lists the common signs and symptoms.

4. Do I know how to treat low blood sugar levels properly?

You should always treat a low blood sugar with fast-acting sugar such as: 4 glucose tablets, 3/4 cup of regular soft drink (pop) or juice, or candy (6 lifesavers).

5. Am I always prepared to recognize and treat a low blood sugar?

- Carry your glucose meter or wear a continuous glucose monitor so that your sugar level can be checked frequently.
- Have sources of fast-acting sugar (glucose) with you at all times so that you can quickly treat low sugar levels.

6. Do I know what causes low blood sugars and how to prevent them?

- Plan ahead and adjust your food or your insulin to prevent low blood sugars when you are more active.
- Avoid delaying meals before driving, or have a snack before you drive.
- Your doctor or diabetes educator can help make sure you get the information you need to drive safely.

7. Have I recently had a serious low blood sugar?

Needing somebody else's help to treat a low blood sugar reading is considered a serious low blood sugar. If you have had a serious low blood sugar level, you should not drive until you have spoken to your diabetes team or doctor about it. They

should review your diabetes treatment before you can drive again.

8. Do I have a problem with low blood sugars when driving?

- Has someone else had to help me while driving?
- Have I had to treat low blood sugar while driving?
- Do I feel my driving skills have ever worsened while driving?
- Have I ever driven somewhere and not remembered how I drove there?

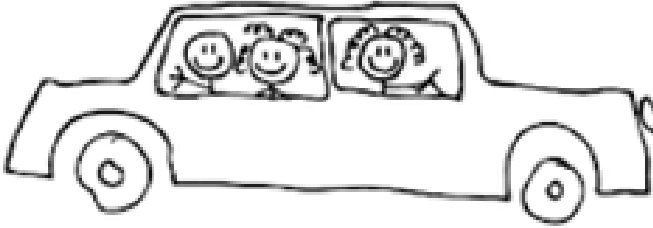
If you have answered yes to questions 7 to 8 above, you should talk to your diabetes team before you drive again.

Tips for drivers

- **Test your blood sugar immediately before driving.**
- **Check your blood sugar at least every 4 hours while driving or wear a continuous glucose monitor.**
- **Before you drive**, if your blood sugar result is **less than 4 mmol/L**, do not drive. Have fast-acting sugar, wait 45 minutes before driving and only **drive once the blood sugar is more than 5mmol/L**.
- Carry your blood sugar testing equipment in the car with you. You should carry your blood sugar testing equipment at all times.
- Keep fast-acting sugar within easy reach while you are driving for example: glucose tablets, candy, regular soft drink (pop) or juice.
- **If you feel you might be having a low blood sugar while driving: pull over and stop driving immediately.** Test your blood sugar and treat a low blood sugar with a fast-acting sugar. Test again in 15 minutes. Treat again if your sugar is still lower than 4mmol/L. Do not drive for 45 minutes after you have had a low blood sugar. Once you are at 4 mmol/L

or more, eat a snack and **only drive once your blood sugar has reached 5 mmol/L. Your judgment and ability to drive safely can be affected after you have had a low blood sugar reading.**

- Testing your blood sugar before you drive and at regular intervals could save your life and the lives of others around you.



DON'T TAKE CHANCES

Low blood sugar while driving can cause serious accidents and even death.

Commercial drivers must follow all of the same recommendations as other drivers, but must also meet the following criteria:

- Have a full eye exam by an ophthalmologist or an optometrist at the time of application for the license. This exam should be done every year or as often as recommended by the ophthalmologist or optometrist.
- If you are treated with insulin, you must keep a log of your blood sugars or have a meter with a memory feature, and keep an electronic record of your blood glucose readings. You should check your blood sugar as often as is recommended by your doctor or diabetes educator. A 6-month record of results is needed for the first application and a complete record is needed every year after that. Blood sugar records must be available on request.

Rules and regulations about medical fitness to drive are set by the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario. Doctors must follow these regulations and write a medical report for anyone whose medical condition makes them unsafe to drive.



<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/medical-review.shtml>

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/pdfs/fact-sheet-diabetes.pdf>

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/pdfs/fact-sheet-commercial-drivers.pdf>

Common signs of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)

(also known as insulin reaction)

Shaky	Trouble speaking
Sweating	Confusion
Light headed or dizzy	Hungry
Nervous, anxious or irritable	Weak
Trouble concentrating	Very tired or drowsy
Blurred vision	Fast or pounding heart beat
Tingling of lips or tongue	Headache
	Nausea

These are only some of the common signs and symptoms; you may experience other symptoms that are not on the list.

Treating a low blood sugar

For low blood sugar (under 4.0 mmol/L) take 15 grams of fast-acting sugar such as:

- 4 glucose tablets (4 g each)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of regular pop or juice
- 3 teaspoons of sugar in water
- 6 Lifesavers
- 1 tablespoon of honey

For VERY low blood sugar (under 2.8 mmol/L) take 20 g such as:

- 5 glucose tablets (4g each)
- 1 cup of regular pop or juice
- 4 teaspoons of sugar in water
- 8 Lifesavers
- 4 teaspoons of honey

Wait 15 minutes. Test your blood sugar again.

If still under 4.0 mmol/L, treat again every 15 minutes until at 5 or more. When your blood sugar is over 4.0mmol/L, eat a meal or snack. Do not drive for 45 minutes after you have had a low blood sugar and wait until your blood sugar is at 5 mmol/L or more.