

Why are Jelly Babies used for low blood sugar?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Some people who live with diabetes, especially type 1 diabetes, carry a packet of Jelly Babies. It is not because they are a treat, although they are. It is because sugary sweets can be a quick way to bring up blood sugar that has fallen too low. This article is general information, not medical advice: always follow the plan agreed with your own diabetes team.

What a hypo is

Hypoglycaemia, often shortened to a hypo, means blood sugar has fallen below normal, usually below about 70 milligrams per decilitre, or 3.9 millimoles per litre. It can happen to people with diabetes who take insulin or certain other medicines.

The general guidance

If someone notices the symptoms of a hypo coming on, the general advice is to check their blood sugar and have a sugary food or drink straight away, as long as they are awake and able to swallow. The aim is to take 10 to 20 grams of carbohydrate to bring blood sugar back up to at least 3.9 millimoles per litre. Suggested sources include glucose tablets or gel, a small glass of sugary fruit juice or a non diet soft drink, sweets, or a tablespoon of sugar or honey.

A common rule of thumb, used by the American Diabetes Association, is the 15 15 rule: take 15 grams of carbohydrate, wait 15 minutes, then check blood sugar again, and repeat if it is still low. Once blood sugar is back to normal, a proper meal within about an hour helps to top up the body's stores.

Why sweets like Jelly Babies

Not all sugars work at the same speed. Glucose and sucrose, ordinary table sugar, are more effective at treating a hypo than fructose, the sugar found in fruit and honey. Jelly Babies are sugary, small and easy to carry, and each one is a similar size, which makes them easy to count. Research suggests glucose tablets are a little more reliable, working within 15 minutes more often than food sources of sugar.

Jelly Baby Month

The link is so well known that in Australia the diabetes charity JDRF sells specially packed jelly babies for its annual Jelly Baby Month, and in 2013 the singer Alison Hams released a Jelly Baby Song to raise awareness of type 1 diabetes.

Check the pack

The amount of carbohydrate in a Jelly Baby depends on the brand and size, so check the nutrition information on the pack, and ask your diabetes team how many to take. Always go by the carbohydrate figure on the pack you are using.

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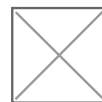
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