

# Diabetes emergency



**IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY  
CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000) FOR AN AMBULANCE.**

**DRSABCD** Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

The DRSABCD Action Plan is the first step when providing first aid. Use this to assess the immediate situation. [DOWNLOAD THE DRSABCD FACT SHEET.](#)

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

### High blood sugar

- excessive thirst
- tiredness
- blurred vision
- hot, dry skin
- smell of acetone on breath

### Low blood sugar

- weakness, shaking
- sweating
- headache
- faintness, dizziness
- lack of concentration
- teariness or crying
- irritability or altered behaviour
- hunger
- numbness around the lips and fingers

These may progress quickly to:

- slurred speech
- confusion
- loss of consciousness
- seizures.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
[WWW.DIABETESAUSTRALIA.COM.AU](http://WWW.DIABETESAUSTRALIA.COM.AU)

## WHAT TO DO

### High blood sugar (hyperglycaemia)

- 1 If the patient has medication, ask if they need assistance administering it. Only help the patient if they request it.
- 2 Encourage the patient to drink water.
- 3 Seek medical aid if symptoms worsen.
- 4 If the patient has not yet been diagnosed with diabetes, encourage them to seek medical aid.

### Low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia)

- 1 Help the patient to sit or lie in a comfortable position.
- 2 Reassure the patient.
- 3 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 4 Give the patient sugar, such as fruit juice or a soft drink (NOT 'diet' eg Coke Zero, Pepsi Max), sugar, jellybeans, glucose tablets.
- 5 Continue giving sugar every 15 minutes until the patient recovers.
- 6 Follow with carbohydrates, eg a sandwich, milk, fresh or dry fruit, or dry biscuits and cheese.
- 7 If there is no improvement in symptoms or the patient becomes unconscious, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.

If you are unsure whether the patient has low or high blood sugar, give them a drink containing sugar (DO NOT use 'diet' soft drinks, eg Coke Zero, Pepsi Max). Giving any form of sugar can save a patient's life if blood sugar is low, and will not cause undue harm if blood sugar is high.

**YOU COULD SAVE A LIFE WITH FIRST AID TRAINING [WWW.STJOHN.ORG.AU](http://WWW.STJOHN.ORG.AU) • 1300 360 455**