

Diabetes is serious: It can be life threatening!

People with diabetes control their blood sugar (glucose) level by balancing medication, food, and activity. Many must test their blood sugar levels numerous times each day. People with diabetes must have access to their medication (insulin or oral medication) and food in order to avoid blood sugar levels that are dangerously high or low.

Diabetes Emergencies

People experiencing diabetes emergencies may appear intoxicated, under the influence of drugs or uncooperative. When in doubt, ask the person or his/her companions if the person has diabetes and check for medical identification bracelet, necklace, or card.

Warning Signs that Require Action

HYPOGLYCEMIA (low blood sugar)

- sweating
- shakiness
- anxiety
- confusion
- difficulty speaking
- uncooperative behavior
- paleness
- irritability
- dizziness
- inability to swallow
- seizure
- loss of consciousness

Action: Give 1/2 can sugared (non-diet) soda (unless the person cannot swallow) and obtain immediate assistance from a qualified health care professional.

HYPERGLYCEMIA (high blood sugar)

- flushed skin
- labored breathing
- confusion
- cramps
- very weak
- sweet breath
- nausea
- loss of consciousness

Action: Give access to water, bathroom, and medication, and obtain immediate assistance from a qualified health care professional.

How to Ensure the Safety of Detainees with Diabetes

- **Identification:** Promptly after individuals are taken into custody, a medical checklist or other recording method must be used to identify persons with diabetes. Ensure that this information accompanies the detainee to all facilities while he/she is in custody.
- **Location:** Detainees with diabetes should only be held where there is immediate access to health care professionals who are able to manage their care and respond to diabetes emergencies.
- **Access to diabetes medication and food:** Detainees with diabetes must continue their medication schedule without interruption to avoid dangerously high blood glucose levels (hyperglycemia) and must always have access to food to avoid dangerously low blood glucose levels (hypoglycemia). In addition, it is important to coordinate meals and medication to maintain blood glucose levels in a safe range.
 - **Sugar:** If a detainee with diabetes requests a source of sugar to treat his/her diabetes, immediately provide that person with a sugared soft drink, juice, or another fast-acting source of sugar, followed by bread or crackers.
- **Emergencies:** If a detainee with diabetes requests medical care or exhibits symptoms of diabetic illness, immediately obtain assistance from a qualified health care professional. Know the fastest way to obtain medical help in the case of an emergency that cannot be handled by on-site personnel.