## Management of Hypoglycaemia in the conscious patient

**Hypoglycaemia is defined as:** a blood glucose level less than 4mmol/L. Hypoglycaemia in the older person can have significant complications, can be severe and prolonged and can precipitate a cardiovascular event (heart attack!)

## 'Four is the floor'

Residents with diabetes taking sulfonylureas or insulin are at an increased risk of hypoglycaemia. Symptoms usually begin when a blood glucose level is less than 4mmol/L. Blood glucose levels between 4-6mmol/L is too low for older people and requires medication adjustment.

Hypoglycaemia can progress to stupor, seizure or coma and will become a medical emergency if not treated promptly.

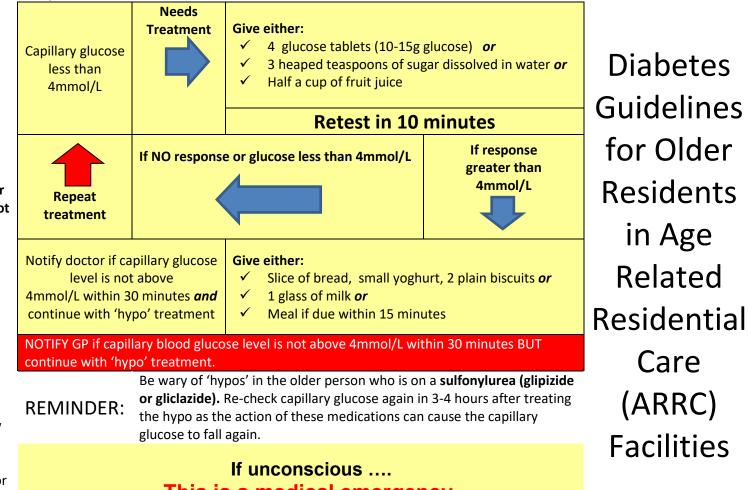
Predisposing factors for hypoglycaemia include: unsuitable diabetes medication regimen, poor nutrition, renal disease, advanced age (>80 years old).

Hypoglycaemia happens suddenly - minutes to hours.

- New onset confusion, irritability, anxiety or change in behaviour
- New weakness, trembling hands or shaking knees
- Feeling suddenly dizzy and lightheaded or new headache
- □ Fast pulse and palpitations (thumping heart)
- Pins and needles (tingling) of lips and tongue or feeling hungry
- Pale and sweaty skin (late sign!)Loss of consciousness



Be aware that symptoms may not be obvious and hypoglycaemia may be unrecognised by the patient.



## This is a medical emergency. If no doctor is immediately available dial 111.

Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand