

Diabetic_Emergencies_1991.txt
XIII
DIABETIC EMERGENCIES

Sugar is required in the body for nourishment. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body use the sugar. When the body does not produce enough Insulin, body cells do not get the needed nourishment and diabetes results. People with this condition take Insulin to keep their diabetes under control.

Diabetics are subject to two very different types of emergencies:

1. INSULIN REACTION (OR INSULIN SHOCK)

This condition occurs when there is TOO MUCH INSULIN in the body. This condition rapidly reduces the level of sugar in the blood and brain cells suffer.

Insulin reaction can be caused by taking too much medication, by failing to eat, by heavy exercise and by emotional factors.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Fast breathing, fast pulse, dizziness, weakness, change in the level of consciousness, vision difficulties, sweating, headache, numb hands or feet, and hunger.

2. DIABETIC COMA

This condition occurs when there is TOO MUCH SUGAR and too little INSULIN in the blood and body cells do not get enough nourishment.

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Diabetic coma can be caused by eating too much sugar, by not taking prescribed medications, by stress and by infection.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Diabetic coma develops more slowly than Insulin shock, sometimes over a period of days. Signs and symptoms include drowsiness, confusion, deep and fast breathing, thirst, dehydration, fever, a change in the level of consciousness and a peculiar sweet or fruity-smelling breath.

FIRST AID FOR INSULIN REACTION AND DIABETIC COMA

Looking for the signs and symptoms listed above will help to distinguish the two diabetic emergencies. In addition, if the patient is conscious, you can ask two very important questions which will help determine the nature of the problem:

1. ASK "HAVE YOU EATEN TODAY?"

Someone who has eaten, but has not taken prescribed medication may be in a diabetic coma.

2. ASK "HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR MEDICATION TODAY?"

Someone who has not eaten, but did not take their medication may be having an Insulin reaction.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE TWO TYPES OF DIABETIC EMERGENCIES

CAN BE

DIFFICULT.

(Always look for an identifying bracelet which may reveal a person's condition)

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OF THE TWO CONDITIONS, INSULIN SHOCK IS A TRUE EMERGENCY WHICH
REQUIRES PROMPT ACTION!

A PERSON IN INSULIN SHOCK NEEDS SUGAR, QUICKLY! IF THE PERSON IS
CONSCIOUS, GIVE SUGAR IN ANY FORM: CANDY, FRUIT JUICE OR A SOFT
DRINK!

SUGAR GIVEN TO A PERSON IN INSULIN SHOCK CAN BE LIFE-SAVING! IF THE
PERSON IS SUFFERING FROM DIABETIC COMA, THE SUGAR WILL NOT CAUSE
THEM FURTHER HARM.

Monitor victims carefully. Seek professional help.