Blood Sugar Control in the Hospital
Lehigh Valley Health Network

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Blood Sugar Control in the Hospital

Why is blood sugar control important in the hospital?
When you are in the hospital, some diabetes medicines do not work well or may not be safe for you. Your blood sugar may be higher in the hospital because:

• you are sick
• stressed
• receiving medicines that may raise your blood sugar

It is important to have your blood sugar at a level that will help with:

• healing
• fighting off germs that may cause infections
• preventing other health problems caused by a high or low blood sugar

How will my blood sugar be controlled?
Your health care provider may order insulin for you. Insulin works best to control blood sugars while patients are in the hospital. Insulin can be given as:

• as an injection into your skin, or
• into an IV (intravenous) tube that is placed in your vein

What should my blood sugar level be while I am in the hospital?
Blood sugar levels for most patients in the hospital should be less than 180 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dl), but greater than 70 mg/dl.

Will I feel different if my blood sugar is low?
A blood sugar less than 70mg/dl can be dangerous and needs to be treated right away.

You may not feel any different or you may feel one or more of the following:

• Cold, clammy, sweaty
• Dizzy or shaky
• Anxious or nervous
• Crabby or confused

• Suddenly weak or tired
• A headache
• A fast heartbeat

If you have any of these symptoms, press your call bell right away. Your nurse will check your blood sugar and provide the ordered treatment if needed.
Will I be on a special diet while I am in the hospital?
- You will likely be ordered a consistent carbohydrate diet. This diet provides the same amount of carbohydrates at each meal. Examples of foods that contain carbohydrates are fruit, milk, bread, and pasta.
- If you are hungry between meals, you may order a non or low carbohydrate snack such as broth, salad, or diet jello from the dining service.

How can I help control my blood sugar while I am in the hospital?
- Eat your meals at least 4 hours apart.
- Tell your nurse:
  - When you order a meal or snack. Ring your call bell when your meal arrives. **Wait to eat until your blood sugar test is done.**
  - What you eat or drink. This includes all meals or snacks delivered to you and brought to you by a visitor.
  - If someone other than you ate or drank from your meal tray.

Your help is needed to keep your blood sugars from going too low or being too high.

**The insulin your health care provider orders is based on:**
- having accurate blood sugar results before your meals
- how many carbohydrates you eat and drink during meals and snacks

Will I need insulin after I leave the hospital if I was not on it before?
The need for insulin to manage diabetes is different for everyone. Your health care provider will work with you to develop a plan that is best for you after you leave the hospital.

In my own words:
These are the things I will do to help control my blood sugar ____________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

How can I learn more about my diabetes?
If you would like more information, please ask your nurse. We can give you information while you are in the hospital. We can also help you follow-up with a Lehigh Valley Health Network outpatient location for diabetes education and support.