

Urgencias and emergencies in people with diabetes



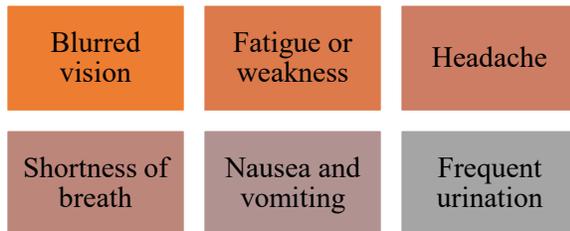
For people with diabetes, controlling blood glucose levels is vital. Very high (hyperglycemia) or very low (hypoglycemia) levels can put their lives at risk. To prevent complications, be sure to take your diabetes medications correctly, follow the diet established by a medical specialist, and check your blood sugar regularly.

How to identify an emergency?

An emergency in people with diabetes does not pose a risk of death or disability. Medical assistance is required within a reasonable period. If not treated in time, it can lead to complications.

It is often recommended to check your blood glucose levels and explore which foods or actions cause these levels to drop or rise.

High blood glucose levels (hyperglycemia) occur when the level rises above 180 to 200 milligrams per deciliter [mg/dl] or 10 to 11.1 millimoles per liter [mmol/L]. If not treated in time, it could lead to an emergency. The following symptoms may occur:



On the other hand, if you suffer from hypoglycemia, low blood glucose (less than 70 mg/dL), you may experience:



What is an emergency situation for people with diabetes?

A health situation that poses a threat and endangers their life. It requires immediate medical attention and intervention, so you should call 9-1-1 or visit the nearest emergency room if:

- Your blood sugar level remains at 300 mg/dL or higher
- Vomiting that does not stop
- Fruity breath odor
- Difficulty breathing
- You have several symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis.



Some complications in diabetics:



Uncontrolled high or low glucose levels can cause diabetic coma, which can lead to loss of consciousness. The person is still alive but unable to respond to external stimuli. The causes are usually:

- **Diabetic ketoacidosis:** This occurs when the body does not have enough insulin. Instead, the liver breaks down fat for energy, a process that produces acids called ketones. When ketones are produced too quickly, they can build up to dangerous levels in the body.
- **Hyperosmolar diabetic syndrome:** This occurs when blood glucose levels are too high, most often in people with type 2 diabetes.

Get ready now! Before a health problem arises, it is important to establish a family plan that includes the following:

- Identify yourself as a person with diabetes. You could wear a bracelet or necklace; if you are unable to speak, doctors will know how to respond to the situation.
- Name and phone number of your primary care physician or specialist.
- Nearest emergency room and urgent care clinic.
- Have your advance directive document ready. This is a document in which you decide what medical treatments you want to receive in case you are too ill to communicate.

You can complete your advanced directive document in the presence of your primary care physician, specialist, or hospital staff.

Social and Emotional Aspects

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after treatment, please visit your primary care physician or call the following hotlines:

Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804

APS Health

787-641-9133

References:

https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/diabetes_complications.html

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/diabetic-coma/symptoms-causes/syc-20371475?p=1>

<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000386.htm>

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