Reactive Hypoglycemia

What is reactive hypoglycemia?
Reactive hypoglycemia is low blood sugar that occurs usually 1 to 3 hours after eating.

What are the signs and symptoms?
• Signs and symptoms may include hunger, weakness, shakiness, sleepiness, lightheadedness, anxiety and confusion.
• Because these symptoms are also symptoms of other problems, it is often difficult to diagnose.

How is reactive hypoglycemia diagnosed?
Your doctor may:
• Ask about signs and symptoms
• Test your blood sugar while you are having symptoms
• Check to see whether the symptoms improve after eating or drinking

How can I avoid symptoms?
Medical treatment usually is not needed for reactive hypoglycemia, however, symptoms may be avoided by paying closer attention to mealtime. These suggestions will help:
• Eat 5 to 6 small meals or snacks spaced apart throughout the day.
• Eat a variety of foods with each meal including meats, poultry, fish, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy products.
• Avoid foods with large amounts of sugar especially on an empty stomach. Examples are regular soft drinks, fruit drinks, syrups, candy, cookies, pie and cakes.
• Try to choose foods high in fiber, such as whole-wheat bread and pasta, brown or wild rice, fresh fruits and vegetables, and dried beans, peas and other legumes.
• Include physical activity in your daily routine.
• Avoid beverages and foods containing caffeine.
• Limit or avoid alcohol.

Who can I talk to about reactive hypoglycemia?
Your doctor can refer you to a registered dietitian for personalized meal planning and nutrition therapy. The long-term goal of nutrition therapy is to incorporate eating habits that will keep blood sugar levels as stable as possible. Although some health professionals recommend a diet high in protein and low in carbohydrates, studies have not shown this diet to be an effective treatment for reactive hypoglycemia.