

# Facing Pet Hypoglycemia: Your Quick Action Guide

If your pet suddenly shows signs of hypoglycemia, every moment matters. Learn the swift interventions you can perform at home to stabilize their condition before getting professional help.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Hypoglycemia can occur when there's not enough glucose, or sugar, in your pet's bloodstream to maintain normal bodily functions; since glucose is the primary energy source for the body's cells, this imbalance can be life-threatening
- Symptoms of hypoglycemia include lethargy, trembling, anxiety, seizures and coma
- Take action at the first signs of hypoglycemia by feeding a regular meal; if that's not possible or your pet is unconscious, rub honey on their gums
- If your pet remains unconscious despite administering honey, you need to get him to an emergency clinic immediately
- Caring for diabetic pets effectively means sticking to a set routine each day, with high-quality meals and insulin given at set intervals and exercise made a priority

An estimated 1 in 300 dogs and 1 in 230 cats may develop diabetes during their lifetimes, and incidence is on the rise.<sup>1</sup> Caring for diabetic pets effectively means sticking to a set routine each day, with meals and insulin given at set intervals and exercise made a priority. Even with the best intentions, however, diabetic emergencies can happen, the most common of which is hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar.

Hypoglycemia can occur when there's not enough glucose, or sugar, in your pet's bloodstream to maintain normal bodily functions. Since glucose is the primary energy source for the body's cells, this imbalance can be life-threatening.

Diabetes in pets is typically managed with insulin injections, which help to regulate blood sugar levels. Insulin is a hormone that facilitates the transfer of glucose from the blood into cells, where it's converted into energy. If your pet receives too much insulin, eats less than usual or exercises very vigorously, their blood sugar levels can drop too low, leading to hypoglycemia.

## Signs of Hypoglycemia in Pets

It's important to be aware of the signs of hypoglycemia, as it represents a diabetic emergency. They include:

- Lethargy
- Weakness

- Trembling and muscle twitching
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
- Lack of coordination
- Seizures
- Coma

These symptoms may common suddenly. In **diabetic cats**, be aware that hypoglycemia may occur when their diabetes goes into remission as a result of appropriate dietary changes and insulin therapy. If your kitty is in diabetic remission and you continue to give insulin injections, it can result in hypoglycemia. This is one reason you want to monitor your pet's blood or urine glucose levels daily.

Pet guardians should also be vigilant for other indicators of a looming diabetic crisis. The presence of ketones in urine, for instance, is a risk factor for diabetic ketoacidosis, a severe condition.

Additionally, signs such as straining to urinate, blood in the urine or **urinating in inappropriate locations** could signal a urinary tract infection. Vomiting or diarrhea, along with a sudden drop in appetite or a sustained decrease over several days, are also critical warnings that shouldn't be ignored. Monitoring for these signs is essential for the well-being of pets with diabetes.

## Hypoglycemic Pet? Here's What to Do

Take action at the first signs of hypoglycemia. Give your pet something to eat if he's awake and alert. If not, try feeding small amounts of honey until he perks up. If you have a diabetic pet at home, you should keep honey on hand at all times for this reason. In a pinch, you can also use corn syrup. You can then try to feed him a regular meal. Do not give your pet another dose of insulin until you've spoken with a veterinarian.<sup>2</sup>

If your dog or cat is unconscious, try rubbing a tablespoon of honey on his gums. If he regains consciousness, feed him and then take him to your vet or an emergency animal hospital for further observation and treatment, if necessary. If your pet remains unconscious despite administering honey, you need to get him to an emergency clinic immediately.

At the veterinary clinic, they'll check your pet's blood glucose and may give him intravenous sugar solutions if necessary. In most cases, pets recover from hypoglycemic episodes when they're caught early and treated appropriately. But without treatment, hypoglycemia can be deadly.

## How to Prevent Diabetic Emergencies in Pets

To prevent hypoglycemia in your pet, be sure you're following a routine each day. Your dog or cat should receive two meals daily, evenly spaced and at consistent times, with each meal providing a similar calorie count to aid in stabilizing blood sugar levels.

The quality of food you give your **diabetic pet** is equally important. A balanced, meat-based, fresh food diet is ideal. Commercial pet foods heavy in potatoes or grains don't provide suitable nutrition, particularly for pets with diabetes. Dogs and cats have important needs for fiber, but no inherent requirement for starch and these foods are particularly unsuitable for diabetic pets.

Carbohydrates are broken down into sugars, putting additional strain on your pet's pancreas because they require increased insulin production or administration to manage blood sugar spikes. However, ensuring your pet is well-fed with human grade, meat-based diets remains paramount.

If your pet is not overweight but reluctant to try new foods, replace 1/2 teaspoon of fresher, meat-based food with your pet's current diet and mix well. Take several months to wean your animal onto more moisture-dense, minimally processed food. Exercise is another important part of the equation. I recommend 20 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise daily at a pace vigorous enough to get your pet's heart thumping. **Increasing movement in cats** can be difficult, but not impossible, and can do wonders for keeping blood glucose levels controlled.

Insulin therapy is typically another part of managing your pet's diabetes. Administer the insulin, whether injectable or oral medication, consistently at the same times daily. Associating insulin administration with meal times can help maintain a regular schedule. To prevent the risk of double dosing, make one person in your household responsible for this task. Keeping a daily record of the times and quantities of food and insulin given to your pet is advisable to prevent missed doses or double dosing.

## **Regular Monitoring and Natural Supplements to Help Diabetic Pets**

Conducting daily at-home monitoring of your pet's urine and/or blood glucose levels is also recommended, and you can document the results in the same log you use to track food and insulin. It's also a good idea to avoid unnecessary vaccinations, as there's a connection between autoimmune disorders and Type 2 diabetes, especially in dogs.

Diabetes can arise if your pet's immune system targets his pancreas. One potential cause for an overly stimulated immune system in animals is frequent vaccinations, especially annual core vaccines that may not offer additional immunity (you can't boost an already-immunized immune system). I suggest asking your veterinarian about vaccine antibody titers, which assesses if your pet even needs additional vaccinations.

There are also natural supplements that can help with glucose metabolism and control, including:

- R-lipoic acid, berberine and Cinnamon (for dogs only)
- L-carnitine
- Carnosine
- Green tea extract
- Fenugreek seed
- Banaba leaf

These supplements, known for their significant impact on blood sugar regulation, in conjunction with dietary interventions, can decrease your pet's insulin needs. However, they should be administered under the guidance of a veterinarian, who will closely monitor your pet's glucose levels and insulin dosage.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Biospace September 21, 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Vetstreet October 30, 2013](#)

---