



## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which the body's ability to produce or respond to the hormone insulin is impaired. Insulin is required for sugar metabolism. Although there are 3 types of diabetes, this Tool Box Talk will focus on 2:

Type 1 – an autoimmune disease where the immune system mistakenly attacks and kills cells in the pancreas, causing little or no insulin production in the body. Commonly develops in childhood, is DNA based, and is irreversible.

Type 2 – occurs when the body cannot properly use the insulin that is produced, or does not make enough insulin. Most commonly develops in adults, is considered lifestyle/age/genetics related, is progressive and may become more difficult to treat over time.

Both types of diabetes are manageable with proper diet, exercise, and medication which may include insulin injections.

## What is a Diabetic Incident?

**Hypoglycemia = low blood sugar.** Hypoglycemia is a deficiency of glucose in the bloodstream

**Hyperglycemia = high blood sugar.** Hyperglycemia is an excess of glucose in the bloodstream

## Diabetes in the Workplace

It is not uncommon for people living with diabetes to conceal their disease from employers or colleagues in order to avoid negative reactions. Employers may have concerns about reliability or productivity. Colleagues may be unsure how to behave or react to the diabetic management techniques. A person who manages their diabetes does NOT pose any threat to their colleagues or the efficiency of their workplace.

## Human Rights Legislation

According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, "human rights legislation specifies that an employer must accommodate an individual with diabetes up to the point of 'undue hardship'. Reasonable accommodation may simply mean altering a work schedule to include regular breaks for snacks, monitoring blood glucose, or administering medication."

## Symptoms

### Low Blood Sugar:

Dizziness and loss of coordination; irritability; confusion; headache; pale or sweaty skin; hungry; weak; numb or tingling around the lips/mouth; can appear "drunk"; rapid loss of consciousness if not treated promptly ('diabetic coma' in severe cases).

### High Blood Sugar:

Tired and lack of concentration; severe thirst; frequent urination; blurred vision; and in severe cases abdominal pains, nausea and vomiting.

## How to Help

1. If the person is unconscious, place them in recovery position and call 911.
2. If conscious:
  - a) Ask them if they need an ambulance
  - b) Have the person test their blood sugar first if they have their blood meter available. Try to give them some sugar glucose gel or tablets, sugar packets or cubes mixed in a little bit of water, syrup, honey, lifesavers, juice, or regular pop
  - c) Stay by their side to see if there are improvements within the first 10-15 minutes
3. If no improvement:
  - a) Immediately call 911 for an ambulance
  - b) Have them sit down (in case they go unconscious – you don't want them to fall)

If you have diabetes, it is your right to keep it to yourself. A person's medical information is confidential and legally cannot be required. However, for safety reasons, you should consider disclosing this information to your immediate supervisor or a colleague so that there is someone who can provide assistance if a diabetic incident occurs.

**Check your Health and Safety protocols to ensure that there are instructions on what to do in a medical emergency and make sure to know who is trained in first aid on site.** For more information on diabetes visit the Canadian Diabetes Association at [www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)



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# How To Use This Resource

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers, is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose to - inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, Informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up to date on the Information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance and any follow up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.



One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks. Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun, and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks](http://www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks)

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool\\_Box\\_Meeting.pdf](http://www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf)

## ABOUT THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded non-profit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees throughout the province. Companies that are registered with Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and fall under the CLASS B – BUILDING CONSTRUCTION rate class are members of the SCSA. SCSA members and supporter members receive preferred pricing on classroom training year-round. The SCSA equips more than 10,000 workers each year with the education and training they need to achieve their organization's safety goals.



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