

## Early Discharge Hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia is the medical term for “low blood sugar”. The brain depends on sugar as its main source of fuel. Severe or prolonged low blood sugar can cause seizures or even brain damage.

Some babies are at risk for low blood sugar after birth. These babies are:

Babies who are “large for gestational age” – greater than the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in weight

Babies who are “small for gestational age” – less than the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in weight

Babies whose mom’s have gestational diabetes

Babies who needed more than 30 seconds of resuscitation (help with breathing) after birth

Babies who were very cold after birth (temperature under 35.1C)

Babies who were born before 37 weeks

If your baby is at risk for low blood sugar, it is recommended that you stay in the hospital for the first 24-36 hours to test your baby’s blood sugar before and after feedings to ensure he or she is able to keep their blood sugar levels normal. This involves a poke on their heel, and a collection of a spot of blood for the test.

If you choose to go home within 24 hours after delivery (if you have delivered in the hospital), or stay home from a birth centre or home birth, there are a few things to watch for that could be a sign of low blood sugar.

Things to watch for are:

Jitteriness – a quick shaking movement of the arms and hands

Poor tone – your baby should be well flexed and never “floppy”

Low temperature – less than 36.1C even after you put your baby skin to skin with a warm blanket covering you both

Lethargy – so sleepy that your baby won’t feed, and is difficult to wake up

To help prevent low blood sugar in newborns in the first 24 hours, it is important to feed your newborn often, at least every 3 hours.

Please call your midwife with any of the above symptoms, or with any other questions or concerns.