

Hypogly

by Darlene Ruitter

Hypoglycemia is a complex, perplexing disorder. And controversial. Some doctors dismiss it as a relatively harmless disorder while others view the condition as a serious threat to one's health.

Translated into lay terms, hypoglycemia simply means 'low blood sugar'. The condition is caused by the body's inability to use sugar effectively. The explanation is simple and basic but the condition and its causes are not, as many have discovered.

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"When I finally found out that I was suffering from hypoglycemia I was so relieved. I finally had an answer as to why I had been experiencing such a vast array of symptoms. I had almost begun to believe that I was cracking up or that I was becoming a hypochondriac extraordinaire," says Karen.

Karen is a university student, in her thirties, who had suffered from the condition for two years before she discovered what was really wrong. "I think my family doctor thought that I was just another frustrated person looking for attention. I had so many tests that I

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was beginning to feel like a guinea pig!" And all the test results seemed to point in the same direction.

"There's nothing wrong with you," was what Karen kept hearing the most.

For her unexplained rapid weight gain (after having remained at a stable weight for years) she was told, "you just eat too much and do too little and you are getting older, you know."

"I was so damned frustrated," she said. "My doctor had no further explanations for my experiencing ravenous hunger at all hours of the day when my diet had not changed and had satisfied my needs before."

Karen later began to develop an extreme sweet tooth for foods previously foreign to her diet. "I'm not a health food addict but I've never even liked sweets and it happened more and more that I would be seized by an overwhelming desire for things like chocolate, chocolate chip ice cream, pastries and chocolate bars! Even lots of coffee and I had never been a coffee drinker before. It seemed I couldn't function without it." Karen knew there had to be an explanation for these metabolic

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changes so she persisted in her treks to the doctor.

A common myth concerning this condition is that people often think that to rectify the sugar imbalance one simply needs to ingest more sugar. Not so!

In fact, it is often by continuously consuming large amounts of easily absorbable sugars, as Karen did, that the strain on the sugar regulating organs can become too great. This causes the organs, particularly the pancreas, to react abnormally, shooting out too much insulin and leaving the body in a low, deprived state.

"I realized later just how much more I was contributing to my problem by trying to pick myself up out of that terrible slump feeling by drinking coffee and eating sweets," said Karen.

The pancreas produces insulin to control the sugars in the blood stream. If it becomes over-reactive and produces too much insulin the blood sugar level drops abnormally

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low causing an array of unpleasant hypoglycemic symptoms.

"I would eat and feel OK for a while and then boom! I'd just crash. I wanted to curl up and go to sleep. It was an awful all-over malaise feeling." The condition can turn a normally even tempered person into a high-strung nervous wreck.

"Even a glass clinking too loudly would sometimes set me off and later I would be overwhelmed with guilt for being so unreasonable. I felt like a yo-yo with my moods going up and down so fast."

