



San Diego County

SHERIFF

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TRAINING BULLETIN

Recognizing Diabetic Emergencies

This training bulletin aims to assist staff in understanding what diabetes is and how to recognize a diabetic emergency.

Diabetes is a condition brought on when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or the body is resistant to the insulin that is produced. An improper level of insulin in the body can lead to two potentially dangerous conditions: low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia). The table below highlights some common but not an exclusive list of all symptoms that can occur during a diabetic emergency.

	LOW BLOOD SUGAR	HIGH BLOOD SUGAR
Onset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can <u>come on suddenly</u> • More common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can <u>come on gradually</u> • Less common
Skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Pale, cold, moist, clammy</u> • Profuse perspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Red, warm, dry</u>
Breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed, idled or normal breathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Labored breathing</u> • <u>Breath has a sickly sweet (fruity) smell</u>
Mental Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hostile or aggressive behavior • Fainting, seizure • <u>May appear intoxicated</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased level of consciousness • Restlessness • Confusion • <u>May appear intoxicated</u>
Pulse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, rapid pulse
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness, headache • Excessive hunger • Drooling • Nausea or vomiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry mouth, intense thirst • Excessive hunger • Excessive urination • Abdominal pain, vomiting • Sunken eyes

This Training Bulletin was prepared by the Detention In-Service Training Unit. If you have expertise in a particular subject and would like to write a training bulletin, please contact the Detention In Service Training unit at [REDACTED]



It is important to understand that several indicators of a diabetic emergency are similar to indications of alcohol intoxication or substance abuse. It is imperative when an individual presents these symptoms, it is recognized as a medical priority.

Deputies must respond to these medical emergencies with **URGENCY** while maintaining officer safety. These conditions can quickly become life-threatening if left untreated.

When encountering an individual presenting with any of the above symptoms, deputies must be thorough in their investigation and never assume the individual is under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances without further questioning and assessment.

People with diabetes are often familiar with symptoms related to their current state. They may alert staff of changes in their condition related to high or low blood sugar and symptoms that may lead to a dangerous state. When a diabetic incarcerated person notifies any staff member that they are symptomatic, immediately contact health staff for an assessment.

If the medical assessment is delayed for any reason, a supervisor (either sworn or medical) will be notified.

For more information, refer to Sheriff's Department Detentions Services Bureau Policy, Procedure [M.5 – Medical Emergencies and Learning Domain 34 for Diabetic Emergencies.](#)