Hypoglycemia Essay, Research Paper

Hypoglycemia

About four years ago we started to notice that my dad was having problems sleeping, he was very moody, and he started getting headaches a lot. After it got to a point where my dad was feeling bad every day we all started to worry. So as any normal person would do, my dad went to the hospital to have it checked out. The doctor found that my dad had developed a disease called hypoglycemia. At first this was very hard for my dad to handle because to subdue the symptoms of his disease he had to drastically change his diet. After doing a lot of research my mom had come up with a good diet for my dad, one that would help him to deal with his hypoglycemia. Now, what once was a major health problem has now become something that is easy to deal with. By eating right and taking vitamins everyday my dad has almost no symptoms. According to the fifth addition of Miller-Krane Encyclopedia & Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, & Allied Health the definition for hypoglycemia is: ?An abnormally low level of sugar (glucose) in the blood.? (731) Glucose, a form of sugar, is the body?s main fuel. Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, occurs when blood levels of glucose drop too low to fuel the body?s activity. In this paper it will be made clear what hypoglycemia is, the possible causes of it, what the symptoms are, and how to cure it.

As was stated before Hypoglycemia is an official name for low blood sugar. According to About Hypoglycemia at

http://www.dynanet.com/~bodychem/hypoq.html: ?Low blood sugar is a body chemistry condition where the amount of glucose in the blood is below the amount needed for the cells of your body to function properly.? To understand why this is bad, one would have to know what blood sugar is and why it is needed. Glucose or blood sugar is the substance the cells in a person?s body use for energy; it is also needed to help the body run correctly. It is imperative to know that glucose is very important in a person?s body because it is used everywhere, About Hypoglycemia at http://www.dynanet.com/~bodychem/hypoq.html put it well when they state: ? Glucose is used by every cell in your body.? The amount of glucose in the blood is controlled mainly by the hormones insulin and glucagon. Too much or too little of these hormones can cause blood sugar levels to fall too low (hypoglycemia). Other hormones that influence blood sugar levels are cortisol, growth hormone, and catecholamines (epinephrine and norepinephrine). The pancreas, a gland in the upper abdomen, produces insulin and glucagon. The pancreas is dotted with hormone-producing tissue called the islets of Langerhans, which contain alpha and beta cells. When blood sugar rises after a meal, the beta cells release insulin. The insulin helps glucose enter body cells, lowering blood levels of glucose to the normal range. When blood sugar drops too low, the alpha cells secrete glucagon. This signals the liver to release stored glycogen and change it back to glucose, raising blood sugar levels to the normal range. Muscles also store glycogen that can be converted to glucose. It is clear that hypoglycemia or low blood sugar is bad for the body because it causes a person to have no energy and makes the cells in the body function improperly.

The most common cause of hypoglycemia is as a complication of diabetes. Conditions that can lead to hypoglycemia in people with diabetes include taking too much medication, missing or delaying a meal, eating too little food for the amount of insulin taken, exercising too strenuously, drinking too much alcohol, or any combination of these factors. People who have diabetes often refer to hypoglycemia as an “insulin reaction.” Hypoglycemia in people who do not have diabetes is fairly common to Americans today. Hypoglycemia can occur in some people under certain conditions such as early pregnancy, prolonged fasting, and long periods of strenuous exercise. People on beta-blocker medications who exercise are at higher risk of hypoglycemia, and aspirin can induce hypoglycemia in some children. Drinking alcohol can cause blood sugar to drop in some sensitive individuals, and hypoglycemia has been well documented in chronic alcoholics and binge drinkers. James F. Balch, M.D. and Phyllis A. Balch, C.N.C., authors of Prescription for Life Nutritional HEALING, believe that unhealthy eating habits can cause Hypoglycemia,

More and more Americans today my have this condition, due to poor dietary habits that include eating large quantities of simple carbohydrates, sugars, alcohol, caffeine, and soft drinks, and insufficient amounts of complex carbohydrates. High stress factors are also believed to be contributing factors to the increasing incidence of hypoglycemia. Hypoglycemia can be inherited, but most often it is precipitated by an inadequate diet. (332)

Bach and Bach also believe that there are many other bodily malfunctions that can cause this disease, ?Many other bodily disorders can cause hypoglycemic problems as well, among them adrenal insufficiency, thyroid disorders, pituitary

disorders, kidney disease, and pancreatitis. Immune deficiency and candidiasis are strongly linked to hypoglycemia.? (?Prescription for Life Nutritional HEALING,? 332). It is obvious that there are many things that can cause hypoglycemia; two important ones are a poor diet and diabetic medication.

When a person is not receiving enough energy from glucose the cells in a person?s body will not function properly. This is a problem for certain cells in the body that only use glucose for energy, such as the eyes and the central nervous system. This is why a hypoglycemic normally experiences nervousness, headaches, faintness and exhaustion. Furthermore a person with hypoglycemia may feel weak, drowsy, confused, hungry, and dizzy. Paleness, irritability, trembling, sweating, rapid heartbeat, and a cold, clammy feeling are also signs of low blood sugar. In severe cases, a person can lose consciousness and even lapse into a coma. I know in the case with my dad he would sometimes get these chills that he could not get rid of, even when sitting next a fire huddled in a blanket. He would also get pretty dizzy sometimes, from having a headache for an extended period of time. There are at least thirty possible symptoms of hypoglycemia, all of which are not very pleasant.

There is actually no adequate cure for hypoglycemia right now, but there is a way to get rid or reduce the symptoms of hypoglycemia. ?Your goal as a hypoglycemic should be to stabilize your blood sugar so you have a consistent supply of energy (blood sugar) being supplied to your cells at all times and are therefore able to avoid problems caused by low blood sugar.? (About Hypoglycemia at http://www.dynanet.com/~bodychem/hypoq.html) For an immediate reaction to low blood sugar a person should eat a snack with natural sugar in it, such as an apple or a pear. The sugar in the apple or pear will raise blood-glucose level and

before long an improvement in symptoms should be noticeable. For long-term effects, a change in the diet must take place before the symptoms will decrease. According to Hypoglycemia at http://content.health.msn.com/content/asset/adam\_disease\_insulin\_shock, people with hypoglycemia should eat more small snacks that are high in fat and fiber, ?Small frequent meals with complex carbohydrates, fiber and fat; and the avoidance of simple sugars, alcohol, and fruit juice are dietary modifications that may be recommended.?

The more a person knows about hypoglycemia, the better they will be able to deal with it, and the healthier they will be for it. The key to beating the disease is to know what and when to eat; it is all about changing the diet. Although most of the time this disease is unpreventable, some of the time it can be caused by a person?s poor diet; it would be a smart play for those that do not have it, to protect themselves from getting it by choosing a healthier diet. Hypoglycemia is an obstacle in a person?s health, but it is an obstacle that can be jumped over with the help of a healthy diet.

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