

For Veterans with Diabetes, Lack of Food Can Lead to Low Blood Sugars

Many Americans, including some of our Veterans, have times when money is a little tight. It may be because of illness or injury causing time away from work, surprise expenses (like a costly car repair), holiday bills, or many other valid reasons.

According to the 2015 U.S. Census, almost one in seven American households had times when they ran out of money for food. In these households, this happens an average of seven times per year.

When money is tight, people sometimes cannot afford nutritious, healthy food. For people with diabetes, these times can be even more difficult. A lack of nutritious food can cause their blood sugar levels to become unsafe.

If you are a Veteran with diabetes, consider this question:

“In the past three months, was there any day when you or anyone in your family went hungry because you did not have enough money for food?”

If the answer is “yes,” you are not alone. It is important to talk about it with your health care team. These times without enough food could lead to low blood sugars.

Low blood sugars can cause mild symptoms like dizziness and shakiness. If blood sugar levels drop too low, it can lead to more severe problems, including falls, seizures, comas, and even death.

So remember to talk about it with your health care team, especially if you have had some of these symptoms of low blood sugars. Your care team will work with you to help you keep your blood sugar at a safe level.

Other key points to remember:

- Many people have times when they do not have enough money for food. It is not something to be ashamed of.
- Medical terms and instructions can be complex and hard to understand. Tell your care team if they have not explained something clearly.
- It can be hard to remember all your concerns when you get into an appointment. So before your next appointment, make a list of questions or issues to discuss with your provider. Let them know which are the most important to you.

For more information, please visit www.nutrition.va.gov.

