

## MRI: Glucagon Injection for Your Scan

### *How it might affect your blood sugar levels*

*This handout is for patients who will receive an injection of glucagon before their magnetic resonance imaging scan.*

### What is glucagon?

Glucagon is a hormone made in your body. When it is given by injection, it relaxes the muscles in your stomach and intestines. It also has some side effects.

### Why is it used for MRI?

Glucagon is given before a *magnetic resonance imaging* (MRI) scan to slow any motion in your bowels. This gives us clearer pictures of your stomach and pelvic areas.



*Please talk with your provider if you have any questions about glucagon side effects.*

### What are the side effects?

Glucagon can cause nausea and vomiting, allergic reactions, and changes in blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar levels. Most side effects last only a short time and will go away on their own.

But, changes in blood sugar can be a serious problem for some people. If their blood sugar goes too low (*hypoglycemia*) or too high (*hyperglycemia*), they may need medical care. This is why we want to make sure that your blood sugar is stable after your MRI.

### What is hypoglycemia?

Hypoglycemia is when your blood sugar (*glucose*) is too low. It can happen if you go a long time without eating. It can also happen if your body makes too much of the hormone *insulin*.

The brain needs glucose to work well. If your brain doesn't get enough glucose, you can get confused and irritable. Low blood

glucose can even affect your ability to speak or see clearly. If blood sugar gets too low, it can result in coma or death.

## **What are the symptoms of hypoglycemia?**

If you have very low blood sugar, you may:

- Feel hungry
- Feel shaky or dizzy
- Have a headache or feel lightheaded
- Have problems speaking
- Feel anxious or weak
- Have double or blurry vision, or other problems seeing

## **How can I avoid hypoglycemia after my glucagon injection?**

- Before you leave the hospital, drink a glass of juice, soda, or another liquid that contains sugar. You can also eat glucose tablets, fruit, or candy.
- Do **NOT** drive. It can be unsafe.

## **When to Call**

- Call your doctor or nurse if:
  - Signs of low blood sugar do not improve after you eat sugar
  - You have a seizure
- Someone must drive you to the emergency room or call 911 if you seem to be asleep and they can't wake you up.

## **What is hyperglycemia?**

After eating food, your body breaks it down into glucose. When your blood glucose is too high, it is called high blood sugar or hyperglycemia. If hyperglycemia is not treated, it can:

- Damage your organs, blood vessels, nerves, and tissues
- Increase your risk for diabetes, heart attack, and stroke

## What are the symptoms of hyperglycemia?

If you have very high blood sugar, you may:

- Feel very thirsty or have a dry mouth
- Have blurry vision
- Have dry skin
- Feel very weak or tired
- Need to urinate often

## How can I avoid hyperglycemia after my glucagon injection?

- If you feel that your blood sugar is high:
  - Do something active. Exercise can help lower blood glucose levels.
  - Do **not** eat foods that are high in sugar or other carbohydrates.
- If you have diabetes or a history of high blood sugar, check your blood glucose levels often. Give yourself insulin, if needed.

## When to Call

Call your doctor or nurse if you:

- Feel weak or confused
- Have problems breathing
- Feel short of breath
- Have blood sugar levels higher than what your doctor advises

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.668.2061