

Information for patients and carers

Management of low magnesium (Hypomagnesaemia)



What is hypomagnesaemia?

If you have been given this leaflet, then you will have something called hypomagnesaemia. This is a condition where your body's levels of magnesium in the blood are abnormally low, and this could be due to:

- Not getting enough magnesium in your diet.
- Not being able to absorb magnesium properly.
- Losing too much magnesium in your urine.

A low magnesium can occur for number of other reasons such as:

- Diarrhoea.
- Certain drugs such as those used to protect your stomach lining, diuretics, antibiotics, drugs used to treat cancer or immunosuppressants.
- Or if you have had part of your small intestine removed.

What are the symptoms of hypomagnesaemia?

Patients do not often get symptoms from the low magnesium and when they do, they are often non-specific.

The symptoms can include:

- Tremors.
- Muscle spasms.
- Not able to sleep.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- Mood changes.
- Feeling sick.
- Reduced appetite.
- Loss of vision.
- Fitting or seizures.

What can I do?

For mild hypomagnesaemia, changes to your diet can help in bringing up the magnesium levels. Foods that contain magnesium include:

- Baked beans.
- Black/Soy/White beans.
- Yoghurt.
- Canned condensed milk.
- Halibut.
- Tuna.
- Prune juice.
- Bananas.
- Apples.
- Avocados.
- Bran.
- Brown rice.
- Dark chocolate.
- Almonds.
- Brazil and pine nuts.
- Cashews.
- Almond milk.
- Pumpkin seeds.
- Spinach.
- Green leafy vegetables.
- Tomato paste.
- Smooth peanut butter.
- Carrots.
- Shredded wheat cereal.

- Baked potatoes (including the skin).
- Wholemeal bread.
- Salmon.
- Broccoli.

Your usual medications may need to be reviewed, as sometimes they can cause the magnesium levels to drop.

It is also not uncommon to have low potassium and calcium levels which will need to be corrected with medications and diet.

What treatments might I need?

The medications used to treat hypomagnesaemia depend on the severity.

Treatment at home:

If magnesium is given orally, this is usually a sachet called Magnaspartate.

You can prepare the Magnaspartate by dissolving one sachet in 50 – 200mls of water, tea, or orange juice. Stir the solution until the liquid is cloudy to clear, then, drink immediately.

If you are unable to swallow or have a feeding tube, the Magnaspartate can be mixed with 200mls of water and administered via the tube as soon as the solution has been prepared.

Instructions will be provided on how often and when the sachets should be taken.

Treatment in hospital:

If your blood levels of magnesium are very low, you will be asked to come into hospital to have an infusion of magnesium.

The magnesium is delivered into your blood stream in a drip, through a cannula or a central venous access device such as a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC), central line or portacath. This will usually be administered in the Acute Oncology Hospital Outpatient Treatment (HOT) clinic.

If you are receiving oncology treatment and have been informed that your levels are low, your bloods will be tested regularly to monitor your levels and treatment will be changed accordingly.

You will be informed on which day your bloods should be taken. Ideally this should happen as early as possible on that day to ensure that the results are available within 'working-hours' (08:30 – 16:30, Monday - Friday). We can then arrange a magnesium infusion in the HOT clinic.

Sometimes your blood results may not be ready in working hours. If this happens and your results are low, you may be contacted by the Doctor-on-call to ask you to come into hospital for an emergency infusion. If this does happen, please do not be alarmed.

The HOT clinic is not open on weekends or bank holidays. If you are contacted by the Doctor-on-call and the HOT clinic is open the following day and you feel well, you can advise that you will attend the HOT clinic for an infusion, but **please contact the oncology helpline at 08:30am the following day to arrange this.**

The number for the oncology helpline is: 01772 523205

If the HOT clinic is not open the following day, you must attend the hospital as advised by the Doctor.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the 24-hour oncology helpline on:

01772 523205

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

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Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

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