

07 DIABETES LANDMINES

WRITTEN BY ADAM BROWN FOR DIATRIBE | [@ASBROWN1](#)

Anyone with diabetes can make a personal list of “**diabetes landmines.**” Each time you see an out-of-range blood sugar over the next seven days, try to pinpoint a reason why it occurred. At the end of seven days, can you spot any patterns? Here were mine:

1 OVERCORRECTING LOW BLOOD SUGARS WITH TOO MANY CARBS

SOLUTION A

Have a single go-to correction for hypoglycemia

Though they’re not the greatest tasting treat, I know that one glucose tab (4 grams of carbs) raises my blood glucose by about 20 mg/dl. It’s predictable, and I know I won’t overeat glucose tabs. Other people I know use mini juice boxes, glucose gels, or packets.

SOLUTION B

Avoid tempting foods as hypoglycemia treatment options

It’s deadly easy to use a low blood sugar as an excuse to overeat a food you would not normally consume. I recall one instance where I stormed the fridge at 2 am and corrected a nighttime low using granola from a friend’s work event. The huge bowl was sitting in our fridge, and “I only had a little.” Bad idea! I woke up in the morning with a blood sugar of 265 mg/dl. When I use low blood sugars as a justification to eat bad food, I always regret it.

2 TAKING TOO MUCH INSULIN (“STACKING”) WHEN HIGH, ONLY TO GO LOW SOON AFTER

SOLUTION A

Patience!

I have to remind myself that in my body, rapid-acting insulin takes about 60-90 minutes to really start dropping my blood glucose and 2-3 hours to finish working. [Note these times vary from patient to patient, day to day, and depending on the size of the bolus.]

SOLUTION B

Use a bolus calculator to account for insulin on board

When I stack insulin, it’s because I’m taking too many manual boluses. Using my pump’s built-in calculator reminds me that there is still bolus insulin floating around my system. If you take injections, the Timesulin pen cap could be helpful; it is available in Europe and coming very soon to the US.

SOLUTION C

Take walks to correct highs and minimize insulin intake

For a moderately high blood sugar (e.g., 180 mg/dl), I prefer a short walk to drop my glucose; it’s more predictable and often sufficient to bring me back down into range. Even if I only see a modest drop in blood sugar, I’m starting from a lower and safer base to correct from.

3 SNACKING DIRECTLY OUT OF THE PACKAGE

SOLUTION A

Tear a smaller hole in the package

I’ve been using scissors to cut a small triangle off the corner of snack packages. This strategy has proven very effective in cutting my consumption; it takes much more shaking, effort, time, and patience to get the same quantity of a snack out of the package.

SOLUTION B

Pour snacks into a container instead of into my hand

Adopting a blanket, “No-eating-directly-out-of-the-package” policy has been somewhat helpful in curbing this bad habit. In addition to cutting small corners in packages (solution A), I have recently begun trying to force myself to find a bowl or Tupperware container to pour into. If I want more, I have to make the effort to return to the package and put more into the bowl.

SOLUTION C

Station myself away from the kitchen or snack source

Much of my snacking comes from being in the same room as food. Sitting in my living room or on the back patio, as well as hiding snacks out of sight, has been very helpful.

4 EATING WHEN I’M NOT HUNGRY

SOLUTION A

Ask, “Am I hungry or just bored/tired/sensing food?”

It’s almost always that I’m around food, and my brain is telling me to eat it, even though I don’t have the sensation of hunger.

SOLUTION B

Drink water or tea

Often, I can overcome a desire to eat by drinking water or tea. I’ve become a big fan of loose-leaf hot green tea over the past few years, which fills me up without any calories.

SOLUTION C

Set a hard-and-fast rule

I’ve been experimenting with the following black-and-white approach: at least three hours must pass between snacks/meals (unless I’m low). This prevents me from snacking indiscriminately just because food is around.

5 EATING TOO QUICKLY OR OVEREATING

SOLUTION A

Eat slower than the people I’m eating with

When I’m eating with at least one other person, it’s easy to see how relatively fast I’m finishing my food. I’ve been aiming to eat slower than my meal partners.

SOLUTION B

Eat with chopsticks

I’ve been experimenting with this on and off for years and love how much it slows down my eating. The hard part is remembering to grab them out of my kitchen drawer.

SOLUTION C

Add more vegetables

For a low-calorie, low glycemic-impact way to fill up, few things beat vegetables. I’ve bought organic frozen vegetables since college – they won’t spoil, are fairly inexpensive, and many experts say they are just as nutritious as buying fresh.

6 EATING TOO CLOSE TO BEDTIME

SOLUTION A

Eat more calories earlier in the day

When I eat late at night, it’s often because I’ve barely eaten anything all day, or grazed on snacks and not eaten proper meals. I like the old saying, “Breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper.”

SOLUTION B

Avoid high-fat meals & snacks within 3 hours of bedtime

I always overeat nuts too close to bedtime, which provokes insulin resistance and a consequent slow and steady rise in blood glucose once I go to bed. See factor #2 at [diatribe.org/issues/68/adams-corner](#) for more detail on why high-fat meals increase blood glucose.

7 NOT INCREASING MY BASAL RATE FOLLOWING A NIGHT OF POOR SLEEP OR ON A DAY WITH LITTLE ACTIVITY

SOLUTION A

Increase daytime basal rate by 10-30%

This is a huge advantage of wearing an insulin pump, since it requires just a few button pushes. This helps overcome the insulin resistance and brings me down into range.

SOLUTION B

Get more sleep

This is easier said than done, of course, but I have found it hugely important for better blood sugars throughout the following day. I aim for more than seven hours of sleep and feel most energetic with more than eight hours.

SOLUTION C

Sneak in activity whenever possible

I always forget that even a little activity makes a difference. I’ve found that even 10 minutes on a stationary bike at a basement hotel gym is better than nothing. When on the road, I also really like the Seven Minute Workout (an iPhone and Android app), which requires no equipment and can be done in hotel rooms.