



## Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes

September 2008

### KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTOXICATION AND A MEDICAL CONDITION

Dear Fire and Emergency Personnel:

My colleagues and I at the Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center have written a training bulletin for police personnel and victim's advocates who may come in contact with a person who has diabetes. The following are symptoms of a person who might be experiencing low blood sugar:

- Combative
- Shaky
- Slurred Speech
- Confused
- Unconscious

Notice that the above symptoms are similar to a person who is intoxicated. If you encounter a person with these signs, you may be able to question the person and ask them if they are diabetic. If the person cannot answer the question about diabetes, look for medical identification around the arms, legs, neck, watch band or look for an identification card in the wallet or purse.

This information is just a reminder of what a person might be experiencing while having low blood sugar. If the above signs are present and a diabetes ID is located, firmly encourage the person to take some form of sugar. A regular sugar soda or juice work great; they can be **life saving**. If they resist treatment, transport to an emergency room.

Please share this information with your colleagues and incorporate it in your training sessions. Enclosed for your patrol cars and emergency vehicles is a label of an informative sticker listing the symptoms of low blood sugar. They can be printed on Avery labels, using template #5395.

If you would like additional diabetes information call Greta Zwickey, at 303-863-1200 or 800-695-2873 or visit [www.ChildrensDiabetesFoundation.org](http://www.ChildrensDiabetesFoundation.org). Thank you for your time and attention to this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Peter Chase".

H. Peter Chase, M.D.

Professor of Pediatrics

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

# TRAINING BULLETIN

## MEDICAL CONDITIONS MAY MIMIC SYMPTOMS OF INTOXICATION

Officers, Paramedics and Fire personnel may have contact with persons who appear to be **INTOXICATED** but who actually have **DIABETES** and are experiencing the following symptoms **BECAUSE OF LOW BLOOD SUGAR:**

**COMBATIVE • SHAKY • SLURRED SPEECH  
CONFUSED • UNCONSCIOUS**

Sugar is the main energy source for the brain and, **IF THE SUGAR IS LOW, THE BRAIN DOES NOT WORK NORMALLY.** If you encounter a person with these signs, you may be able to question them and ask if they have diabetes. If they are unable to respond, **LOOK FOR MEDICAL IDENTIFICATION** on the arms, legs, neck or look for an identification card in their wallet or purse.

If these signs are present and a diabetes ID is located, firmly encourage the person to take some form of sugar. **A REGULAR SUGAR SODA OR JUICE CAN BE LIFESAVING.** Some source of sugar (a can of juice) might be carried in the patrol car. If they resist treatment, they should be immediately transported to an emergency facility.

**PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH OTHER EMERGENCY PERSONNEL.  
IT MAY SAVE A LIFE.**

For additional information on diabetes call **Greta Zwickey** at 303-863-1200 or 800-695-2873 or visit the **Children's Diabetes Foundation website** at [www.ChildrensDiabetesFoundation.org](http://www.ChildrensDiabetesFoundation.org). If you would like to receive this information via email please email Greta at [greta@childrensdiabetesfoundation.org](mailto:greta@childrensdiabetesfoundation.org).