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SP556-Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers: The ABCs of Testing for Blood Sugar Control

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Taking control of your diabetes can make you feel better and stay healthy. Lowering your blood sugar (also called blood glucose) by any amount lessens your chances of getting diabetes eye, kidney and nerve disease. To control your diabetes, you must **know your blood sugar numbers**.

There are two different tests to measure your blood sugar:

- 1.** The **hemoglobin A1c test** (pronounced heime-glo-bin A-one-C) measures your blood sugar control **over the last three months**. It is the **best way** to know if your blood sugar is under control.
- 2.** A **finger-stick test** you do yourself using a blood glucose meter measures your blood sugar **at the time you test**.

You need **both** tests to get a complete picture of your blood sugar control.

The Hemoglobin A1c Test: The Best Test for Blood Sugar Control

What is the hemoglobin A1c test?

The hemoglobin A1c test (also called the H-b-A-one-c) is a simple lab test that shows the average amount of sugar that has been in your blood **over the last three months**. Your health care provider does the test by taking a small sample of your blood and sending it to a lab.



Why should I have a hemoglobin A1c test?

The hemoglobin A1c test is the **best test** for your health care provider to tell if your blood sugar is under control. This test shows if your blood sugar is close to normal or too high.

What is a good hemoglobin A1c testing goal?

The hemoglobin A1c goal for people with diabetes is less than seven percent. If your test result is less than seven percent, your treatment plan is probably working and it is likely that your blood sugar is under good control.

A high hemoglobin A1c is one that is **greater than eight percent**. A high test result means that you have a greater chance of getting eye disease, kidney disease or nerve damage. If your test result is greater than eight percent, you may need to work with your health care provider to change your treatment plan.

How often do I need this test?

Ask your health care provider for a hemoglobin A1c test at least two times a year. Get the test more often if your blood sugar stays too high or if your health care provider makes any changes in your treatment plan.

**Take this brochure to your health care provider.
Ask about the hemoglobin A1c test and what
your test result means.**

The Finger-Stick Test: For Testing Your Own Blood Sugar Using a Blood Glucose Meter

What is a finger-stick test?

A finger-stick test is a simple test you can do using a blood glucose meter to check changes in your own blood sugar. The finger-stick test tells you what your blood sugar is at the time you test.

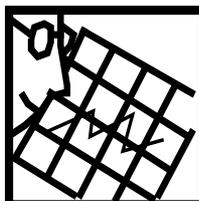


Why should I do this test?

Self-testing helps you see how food, physical activity and diabetes medicine affect your blood sugar. The reading you get from these tests can help you manage your diabetes day by day or even hour by hour. Keep a record of your test results and review it with your health care provider.

What is a good self-testing blood sugar goal?

Ideal goals for most people with diabetes when self-testing using a blood glucose meter are:



Before Meals.....80-120 mg/dl

At Bedtime.....100-140 mg/dl

Your blood sugar goals may be different from these ideal goals. Ask your health care provider what goals are best for you.

How often should I do this test?

Finger-stick tests are usually done before meals and/or at bedtime. Ask your health care provider how often to test your blood sugar.

If I test my own blood sugar using a blood glucose meter, do I still need the hemoglobin A1c test?

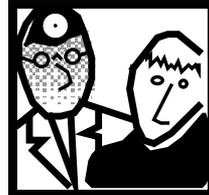
YES. The results of each test will tell you and your health care provider whether your blood sugar is under control. Talk to your health care provider about how often you need each test.

Does my insurance pay for self-testing supplies?

Medicare pays for blood glucose meters and test strips for people with diabetes. If you have Medicare insurance, ask your health care provider for details.

Take Control of Your Blood Sugar

1. Take this brochure to your health care provider and ask for a hemoglobin A1c test at least twice a year.
2. Test your own blood sugar using a blood glucose meter as often as needed.
3. Talk to your health care provider about your blood sugar goals for the hemoglobin A1c test and the finger-stick test using a blood glucose meter.
4. Eat the right foods, exercise and take prescribed medicines to keep your blood sugar under control.
5. For more information, call 1-800-438-5383.



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