

Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers

If you have diabetes, keeping your blood glucose (sugar) numbers in your target range can help you feel good today and stay healthy in the future.

There are two ways to measure blood glucose

- The A1C is a lab test that measures your average blood glucose level over the last 2 to 3 months. It shows whether your blood glucose stayed close to your target range most of the time or was too high or too low.
- Self-tests are the blood glucose checks you do yourself. They show what your blood glucose is at the time you test.

Both ways help you and your health care team to get a picture of how your diabetes care plan is working.

About the A1C test

Why should I have an A1C test?

The A1C tells you and your health care team how well your diabetes care plan worked over the last 2 to 3 months. It also helps you decide the type and amount of diabetes medicine you need.

What is a good A1C target for me?

For many people with diabetes, the A1C target is below 7. You and your health care team will decide on an A1C target that is right for you.

If your A1C stays too high, it may increase your chances of having eye, kidney, nerve, and heart problems.

How often do I need an A1C Test?

You need an A1C test at least twice a year. You need it more often if your results are too high, if your diabetes treatment changes, or if you plan to become pregnant.

What if I plan to become pregnant?

Talk with your health care team before you get pregnant. Your doctor can help you reach an A1C target that allows a healthy baby to develop. If you are already pregnant, see your doctor right away.

About self-tests for blood glucose

Why should I do self-tests?

Self-tests can help you learn how being active, having stress, taking medicine, and eating food can make your blood glucose go up or down. They give you the facts you need to make wise choices as you go through the day.

- Keep a record of your results. Look for times when your blood glucose is often too high or too low. Talk about your results with your health care team at each visit. Ask what you can do when your glucose is out of your target range.

How do I check my blood glucose?

Blood glucose meters use a small drop of blood to tell you how much glucose is in your blood at that moment. Ask your health care team how to get the supplies you need. They will also show you how to use them.

What is a good target range for my self-tests?

Many people with diabetes aim to keep their blood glucose between 70 and 130 before meals. About 2 hours after a meal starts, they aim for less than 180. Talk with your health care team about the best target range for you.

Can my blood glucose get too low?

Yes, it can. If you feel shaky, sweaty, or hungry, check your blood glucose level to see if it is below your target range. Carry something sweet with you at all times, such as 4 hard candies or glucose tablets. If your blood glucose is too low, eat the candy or glucose tablets right away. Let your health care team know if this happens often. Ask how you can prevent it.

How often should I check my blood glucose?

Self-tests are often done before meals, after meals, and at bedtime. People who take insulin need to check more than those who do not take insulin. Test whenever you want to know your blood glucose.

What is in it for me?

Finding the time to check your blood glucose can be a struggle. It is also hard when your glucose levels do not seem to match your efforts to manage your diabetes. Keep in mind that your self-test and A1C results are numbers to help you, not to judge you.

Many people find that self-testing and using the results to manage their diabetes pays off. They are more able to take charge of their diabetes so that they can feel good today and stay healthy in the future.