

## Diabetes: How to Test Your Blood Sugar



A home blood sugar test measures how much sugar (glucose) is in your blood at the time you check it. You can do the test anywhere. All you need is a blood glucose meter.

### Why test your blood sugar?

Monitoring your blood sugar level takes the guesswork out of your daily diabetes care. It's important to test your blood sugar because:

- You need to know when your blood sugar is high or low to prevent an emergency.
- You need to know if your blood sugar is always too high. High blood sugar can cause problems with your heart, nerves, and blood vessels.
- If you take rapid- or short-acting insulin before meals, you need to know how much insulin to take.
- You need to know how exercise, diet, stress, and being ill affect your blood sugar.

You may also use home blood sugar testing to:

- Choose the correct first insulin dose and schedule, or adjust your insulin doses or schedule.
- Check for high or low blood sugar when you have symptoms.

### How do you test blood sugar?

You will prick your finger, palm, or forearm with a small needle called a lancet to get a drop of blood. After putting the test strip in the blood glucose meter, place the blood on the test strip. The blood glucose meter gives the test results within a minute or less.

Every blood glucose meter is different. Some may need a larger or smaller drop of blood. Follow the instructions carefully.

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water. Dry them well with a clean towel. You may also use an alcohol wipe to clean the area where you get the blood.
- Put a clean needle in the pen-sized holder.
- Remove a test strip from the bottle. Replace the lid right away. This keeps moisture from affecting the other strips. Test strips are sometimes stored inside the meter.
- Prepare the blood sugar meter. Follow the instructions included with your meter.
- Stick the side of your fingertip with the needle. Do not stick the tip of your finger. It will be more painful and you may not get enough blood to do the test. Some blood sugar meters use needle devices that can get a blood sample from your palm or forearm.
- Put a drop of blood on the correct spot of the test strip.
- Using a clean cotton ball, apply pressure where you stuck your finger. This will stop the bleeding.

- Follow the directions with your blood sugar meter to get the results. Some meters take only a few seconds to give the results.
- Record your results. You and your doctor will use this record to see how often your blood sugar is within the recommended range. Your doctor will also use the results to decide if your medicines should be changed.

#### **How often should you check it?**

You need to check your blood sugar at least once a day. If you take insulin, you may need to check it several times a day. Make sure to discuss this with your doctor.

#### **What do the results mean?**

The American Diabetes Association recommends that you stay within certain blood sugar level ranges. For example, one blood sugar range might be 70 before meals, and less than 180 one to two hours after a meal. But your doctor may set a different range for you. If you are pregnant and have diabetes, for example, your blood sugar ranges would be different.

#### **What can affect the results?**

Many things can affect your test results, including:

- The type and amount of food you eat.
- Illness or emotional stress.
- Smoking.
- Drinking alcohol.
- Medicines, such as birth control pills and some high blood pressure pills.
- Being sick or having an injury.
- Exercise.