



Testing for a Reason: New Information About Type 2 Diabetes and Testing Your Blood Sugar

A Guide for You

Blood Sugar Testing

Testing blood sugar at home using test strips and a meter is common practice for people with type 2 diabetes. The results can help you:

- See how food and exercise affect your sugar level
- Understand how well your diabetes treatments are working
- Guide any changes that should be made to your diet, activity level, or other treatment.

How Often Should I Be Testing My Blood Sugar?

New Canadian and international research shows that most people with type 2 diabetes who are *not using insulin* don't need to regularly self-test their blood sugar, because self-testing does not improve their blood sugar control or quality of life in a significant way.

So, if you manage your diabetes by diet alone or with pills, you can self-test less often without harming your health.

In adults with type II diabetes who are using long acting insulin, monitoring of blood sugar should be individualized but testing of up to 14 times per week should be sufficient for most patients at most times.

I Don't Use Insulin, But Are There Times When I Should Test More Often?

If you're *not using insulin* to manage your diabetes, you don't need to test your blood sugar regularly, but there are important times when you may want to test more often. These include when:

- You are at risk of having low blood sugar (because you take a sulfonylurea drug, for example)
- Your blood sugar level goes up and down or is hard to control
- You have major changes in your daily routine or your medications change
- You are sick (with the flu or an infection, for example)
- You are pregnant or trying to get pregnant
- Low blood sugar is a safety hazard at your job.

In these types of situations, be sure to talk to your health care provider about when and how often you should be testing your blood sugar.

What are the signs of low blood sugar?

- Feeling shaky or weak
- Cold sweats
- Pounding heartbeat
- Headache
- Feeling cranky or nervous
- Tingling skin or numbness
- Hunger
- Upset stomach
- Unclear thinking

Testing for a Reason

When you do self-test your blood sugar, make sure to take action based on the result. In other words, test for a reason! Your health care provider can help you decide what to do if your blood sugar level is too high or too low.

The A1C test

Today, health care providers mainly use a lab test called an A1C test to keep track of your blood sugar. The A1C test is a blood test that is done up to four times per year.

The results give your health care provider an overall picture of how well your treatments are working to control your blood sugar. Keeping track of your A1C results is another tool you can use to manage your diabetes.

What Else Can I Do to Manage My Diabetes?

Many people think that self-testing their blood sugar is the main way to manage their diabetes, but taking care of your diabetes includes so much more.

There's a lot that you can do to stay healthy and prevent complications:

- Eat healthy meals and avoid junk food.
- Be active: Walking regularly is a good start.
- Take all your medications according to your health care provider's instructions.
- Make sure your blood pressure and cholesterol levels are in a healthy range.
- Go for regular eye checkups.
- Regularly check your feet for any sores.
- Manage your stress well.
- See your health care providers regularly and talk about your A1C results.

Where can I get more information?

There are many ways you can learn more about diabetes and get support:

- Government of Newfoundland & Labrador Chronic Disease Management (http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/chronicdisease/improving_health_my_way.html)
- Diabetes Education Centres – physician referral required
- Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (www.cadth.ca/diabetes-library)

- Canadian Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.ca)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Leadership Centre (709-754-0953)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Health Line
 - 1-888-709-2929
 - TTY: 1-888-709-3555. Service bilingue.

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