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# Know Your™ Health Facts

## Blood Sugar Monitoring



How to improve your self-testing

## What is Blood Sugar Testing?

Blood sugar (or blood glucose) test tells you how much sugar is in your blood at the moment it is tested. One way to find out the amount of sugar in your blood is to get a blood test in a doctor's office. Another way to find out is to test it yourself. This is called self-monitoring or self-testing. Many factors affect your blood sugar levels every day. Testing your blood sugar will let you know if your meal plan, medication, and physical activity levels are working to help you manage your diabetes.

## Who Should Test Their Own Blood Sugar?

Blood sugar testing is important for everyone with diabetes. People living with diabetes can learn how to test their own blood sugar using a blood glucose (sugar) meter.

## How Can Blood Sugar Self-Testing Help Me?

When you self-test regularly, you learn what makes your blood sugar rise and fall. With the help of your healthcare team, you can make adjustments to your meal plan, medications, and physical activity levels that will help you better manage your diabetes. When you keep your blood sugar in a healthy range, you lower your risk of developing problems with your heart, eyes, kidneys, brain, feet, and nerves that can occur because of diabetes.

## How Often Should I Test My Blood Sugar?

Both the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE) recommend self-testing for patients with diabetes.

For patients taking multiple insulin injections per day or on insulin pump therapy:

- ADA recommends self-testing 3 or more times a day<sup>1</sup>, and
- AACE recommends self-testing 2 or more times a day, and additionally, before any injection of insulin<sup>2</sup>

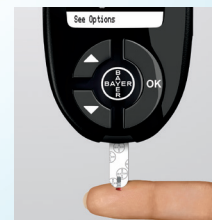
For patients not on insulin therapy, the ADA and AACE recommend self-testing because of the potential benefits of receiving feedback on the effects of lifestyle and medications.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Your healthcare team will help you decide how often to test your blood sugar. The decision to test depends on your individual diabetes treatment plan. A personalized blood sugar testing schedule may help you understand how your meals, medications, and level of physical activity affect your blood sugar levels.

## When Should I Test My Blood Sugar?

Your healthcare team will help you decide when you should test your blood sugar. Testing at different times during the day or even at night is a good idea. The number of tests you need to do each day or each week is different for everybody. One approach to blood sugar testing that your healthcare team may ask you to consider is called **Paired Testing**. Paired Testing recommends that you test your blood sugar level twice a day closely together or “in a pair”.

When you compare a “pair” of numbers, you may be able to see how actions, such as diet and exercise, affect your blood sugar levels.



Examples of Paired Testing are:

- Before and 2 hours after breakfast
- Before and 2 hours after lunch
- Before and 2 hours after dinner
- Right before and right after exercise
- Before going to sleep and when you wake up in the morning before eating/drinking

The **Know Your™ Paired Testing** booklet illustrates several examples of Paired Testing exercises you can do.

Ask your HCP to share it with you when discussing when to test your blood sugar.

If you take insulin, you may also test your blood sugar levels occasionally in the middle of the night, for example between 2 AM and 3 AM.

It is a good idea to do extra tests when:

- There are changes in your diabetes treatment plan
- You start new medications for diabetes
- You think that your blood sugar is too high (signs include feeling very thirsty, frequent urination, fatigue, blurry vision, and tiredness)
- You think that your blood sugar is too low (signs include feeling lightheaded, dizzy, confused, shaky)
- If you are sick, or feeling sick
- You have a lot of stress

## Looking For Patterns

Life varies from day to day, and blood sugars vary for reasons that are sometimes hard to figure out. However, over the course of a week, can become very clear. For example, the bagel and juice you had for breakfast may cause a big rise in blood sugars. Looking at the numbers over a few days will help you to see a pattern.

For example, you may find that blood sugars seem to go up after breakfast on most days. Once you identify this pattern, you and your healthcare team can work together to modify your meal plan to better manage your diabetes.

This same approach can be used to identify patterns associated with your medications or physical activity.



## How Do I Make Sense of Different Blood Sugar Levels at Different Times?

It may be hard to understand the meaning of your blood sugar tests. Your healthcare team will help you understand your blood sugar test results. Once you understand your results, you may be able to better manage your diabetes. Work with your healthcare team to set your blood sugar goals.

### Blood Sugar Testing Goals

My fasting goal is: \_\_\_\_\_

My goal before meals is: \_\_\_\_\_

My goal 2 hours after meals is: \_\_\_\_\_

My bedtime goal is: \_\_\_\_\_

## Do I Really Need to Keep Records?

Yes absolutely! Writing down your blood sugar readings in a logbook helps you manage your diabetes. Also, most blood glucose meters have a memory that stores your blood glucose test results. You can download the memory into a special computer program to view and analyze your results.





Remember to bring your logbook or print-out of your readings when you visit your healthcare team. Together, you can look at the patterns of your blood sugar results. You can then see how your meal plan, medications, or level of physical activity affect your blood sugar. The patterns will help you and your healthcare team decide if changes are needed in your diabetes treatment plan.



## What Can I Do to Improve My Self-Testing?

Talk to your healthcare team about your meter and how to test. Always read the user manual and follow the directions that come with your meter.

The most important thing you can do to ensure a good self-test is to properly wash and dry your hands right before the test, as explained in the user manual. If your hands are not completely clean, this can cause an incorrect blood sugar reading. If possible, before doing the test, wash your hands in warm, soapy water and dry them well. (DO NOT use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, gels or wipes in replacement of soap and water).

Here are some additional tips to improve your self-testing practices:

- Keep your meter clean
- Keep your testing supplies at room temperature
- Check the expiration date of your testing supplies



- Make sure your meter is correctly coded to the test strips you are using. CONTOUR®NEXT portfolio meters offer **No Coding™ technology** to reduce both the steps in the testing process as well as helping you get easy, highly accurate results
- Put your hand down to let gravity help the blood flow to your fingertips
- Stick the side of your finger with a new lancet in a lancing device
- Get enough of a blood drop to apply to the test strip. CONTOUR®NEXT portfolio meters offer **Second-Chance™ sampling**, allowing you to apply more blood onto the same test strip to help prevent wasted test strips
- Record the results in your logbook



**Regular self-testing gives you and your healthcare important information to help you manage your diabetes and stay healthy. Your healthcare team can help you decide how often and when you should check your blood sugar, as well as help you understand your results.**

### References:

1. American Diabetes Association. Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes – 2015. *Diabetes Care*. 2015; 38 (1) 1 – 99.
2. Handelsman Y, Mechanick JI, Blonde L, et al. American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists Medical Guidelines for Clinical Practice for developing a diabetes mellitus comprehensive care plan. *Endocr Pract*. 2011;17(suppl 2):1-53.