

Healthy Living: Checking Blood Glucose¹

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Checking your blood glucose levels is an important part of managing diabetes. Your blood glucose values let you know how well your care plan is working and if you need to make any changes.

Who Should Check

Anyone with diabetes can benefit from checking blood glucose, especially if you

- take pills or insulin for diabetes,
- have a hard time controlling blood glucose,
- have low blood glucose (hypoglycemia) episodes without warning signs, or
- have high blood glucose (hyperglycemia) episodes.

When to Check

Ask your health care provider when to check your blood glucose. Here are some guidelines for when to check your values:

- Before eating a meal or a meal-size snack
- Two hours after eating a meal or a meal-size snack
- Before and after doing physical activity/exercise
- Before going to bed for the night

How to Check

Stick your finger with a lancet, which is a tiny needle. This gives you a drop of blood to put on a test strip. The strip goes into a blood glucose meter (Figure 1), which is a small machine that “reads” your blood glucose.



Figure 1. A blood glucose meter (or glucometer) uses a tiny drop of blood to test your blood glucose level.

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Here are the steps for checking your blood glucose:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly.
2. Put a test strip into your meter.
3. Stick the side of your fingertip with a lancet.
4. Gently squeeze your finger until you get a drop of blood.
5. Put the blood on the test strip and follow the meter's instructions to get the reading. (If you have trouble getting blood, wash your finger with warm water or hold your hand down before squeezing your finger.)

Note: Some meters let you test your upper arm, forearm, base of thumb, or thigh, but *it's best to use your fingertip when you suspect low blood sugar.*

Keeping Track

Keep a written log of your blood glucose or use a tracker on a computer or mobile device. This will help you see how food, activity, and stress can affect your levels. Take your log when you see your health care provider. For a written log, use the following table (Table 1), or ask your diabetes health care team for a log. If your blood glucose is often too high or too low, your health care provider may work with you to change your diabetes plan.

Your Plan

Ask your health care provider for your target blood glucose levels and when to call your diabetes care team (Table 2). Keep a copy of this information with your medications and a copy in your wallet or purse.



Figure 2. It's best to use your fingertip when you suspect low blood sugar.

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Table 1. My Blood Glucose Log

Date and Time	Breakfast		Lunch		Dinner		Bedtime	Notes
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After		

Table 2. Target Blood Glucose (mg/dl)

Before meals: _____ 2 hours after meals: _____

At bedtime: _____

Other times and goals:

When to call your diabetes care team:

Important telephone numbers: