

Why test blood sugar levels?

If you have diabetes, you should test your blood sugar levels with a glucose meter.

This test tells how much sugar (glucose) is in your blood.

It is important to keep blood sugar levels close to normal. Testing your blood sugar will let you know if your blood sugar is under control. Controlling blood sugar can lower your risk of:

- Eye disease
- Kidney damage
- Nerve damage
- Heart disease
- Poor healing, circulation problems

When to test

Your provider will help you decide when and how often to test your blood sugar levels. Blood sugar testing should be done at different times of the day so you can see how things like eating, medicine, exercise, illness, and stress affect it. You may need to test up to 4 times a day or more.

Good times to test are:

- Before breakfast (a fasting test)
- Before a meal
- 1 to 2 hours after a meal (called post-prandial testing)
- Before sleeping
- 2:00 to 3:00 a.m. (if you take insulin)

You may need extra tests if:

- Your provider changes your treatment.
- You start a new medicine.
- You think your blood sugar is too low or too high.
- You are sick.

Your blood sugar readings may be different throughout the day. For example, blood sugar levels may be higher after a meal. Your provider will help you set goals for your blood sugar levels.

How to test your blood sugar

Your provider will tell you the best way to test your blood sugar. Always follow your provider's instructions.

The fingertip test is a common way to test your blood sugar. Here are some tips for fingertip testing:

- Follow your provider's instructions.
- Read your meter's instructions.
- Keep your meter clean.
- Store testing supplies at room temperature.
- Be sure your testing supplies are not expired.
- Before you test, wash your hands with soap and dry them.
- Improve blood flow to your fingers by hanging your hand down.
- Use the lancet to prick the side of your finger.

- Put the drop of blood on a test strip or sensor.
- Write down your results.

Alternate site testing

You can also test blood sugar at the forearm, palm, belly, or thigh. This is called **alternate site testing**. You and your provider might choose alternate site testing to give your fingertips a rest, or to protect your fingertips if you work with your hands.

Important tips about alternate site testing:

- Your test results may be different.
- You will notice a big difference if you use alternate site testing after a meal, after taking insulin, or after exercise.
- A fingertip test may help find low blood sugar sooner.

Do not use alternate site testing:

- 2 hours after a meal
- After taking insulin
- Following exercise

Use a fingertip test instead of an alternate site if you:

- Have ever had low blood sugar and did not know it (you did not feel it).
- Expect to have changes in your results.
- Need to detect low blood sugar quickly.
- Use an insulin pump.

Keep track of your test results

Record keeping is very important. Your provider will look at your records to help decide if any changes are needed. Keep track of:

- Blood sugar readings.
- Date and time of the test.
- If the test was done before or after a meal.

You can also keep track of diet, exercise, medicine, and how you feel.



Testing your Blood Sugar