

You and Your Blood Sugars

Testing for Better Health

This is the second in a series of four handouts that you will get from the Nova Scotia Diabetes Assistance Program.

Other handouts in the series include:

- 1 Healthy Living and Self-Care
- 3 Staying Well with Diabetes
- 4 Making the Most of Your Medications

Why test my blood sugars?

Testing your blood sugars (glucose) will give you important information that can help you manage your diabetes. Use the test results to

- Know if your blood sugars are too high, too low, or in the best range for you.
- Understand how your food, activity, and diabetes medications affect your blood sugars.
- Decide when to see your doctor or other diabetes team members. Besides your doctor, diabetes team members include nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, and others with special training in diabetes.

What causes high blood sugars?	What causes low blood sugars?
Too much food	Not enough food
Not enough exercise or activity	Increased activity or exercise
Cold, flu, other illness, or infection	Delayed meal or snack
Not enough diabetes medication (insulin or pills)	Too much diabetes medication

What should my blood sugar numbers be?

You should set your blood sugar goals with your doctor or diabetes team.

Usual blood sugar goals for adults:

- before meals and before bedtime snack (if you take one): 4.0 to 7.0 mmol/L.
- 2 hours after meals: 5.0 to 10.0 mmol/L.

Children and pregnant women with diabetes will have different goals. Ask your doctor what is best for you.

If your test results are above or below your goals and you do not know why, see your doctor or diabetes team. They will help you change your treatment plan.

When should I test?

Ask your doctor or diabetes team when you should test. Best times vary depending on your treatment plan. Sample testing routines:

If you are **taking insulin**, test 4 times a day:

- Test before each meal and before your bedtime snack, if you have one, or at bedtime.
- Test 2 hours after a meal 1 to 2 times a week. This will help you see how well your insulin is working with this specific meal.

If you are having low or high blood sugars, you may need to test more often.

If you are **taking diabetes pills**, test 2 times a day, 3 to 4 times a week:

- Day 1, test before breakfast and supper.
- Day 2, test before lunch and bedtime.
- Test 2 hours after a meal 1 to 2 times a week.

If your medicine is being adjusted to improve your blood sugars, you may need to test up to 4 times a day.

If you manage your diabetes **with a meal plan (diet) and exercise (no diabetes pills)**, test 1 to 2 times a day, 3 to 4 times a week:

- Test before a different meal each day. Day 1 before breakfast, day 2 before lunch, and so forth.
- Test 2 hours after the meal 1 to 2 times a week.

Test your blood sugars more often

- When you are ill with a cold, flu, fever, or infection.
- Before and after strenuous or unplanned activity if you are taking insulin or diabetes pills.
- Before driving or using heavy equipment or machinery if you are taking insulin or diabetes pills.

Remember

Always test as soon as you feel your blood sugar is low. Feeling dizzy, shaky, hungry, sweaty, or weak are symptoms of low blood sugar.

Tips for using your meter, lancets, and strips

Wash your hands with soap and warm water before each test.

Meter

- Ask a pharmacist or diabetes team member to show you how to use your meter. If you change meters, ask how to use the new meter. Keep the user manual for this new meter handy.
- If your meter needs special coding, do this each time you open a new box of strips.
- Have your meter checked for accuracy at least once a year, when you have blood work done at the lab.
- If you have problems with your meter, look in the meter's user manual or call the 1-800 toll-free phone number in the manual for help.

Lancets

- Use lancets only once.
- Discard your used lancets in a "sharps" container. Ask your pharmacist for a sharps container. Return sharps containers to the pharmacy when they are full.

Strips

- Store your strips carefully. Extreme heat, cold, or humidity can damage your strips. Keep your strips in their original container. Do not store strips in the bathroom.
- Don't use strips after their expiry date.

Testing is very important

Use your results to make decisions on how to care for your diabetes. Test as often as recommended. Always share these results with your doctor and diabetes team.

Where do I go to learn more about my diabetes?

Your doctor

Your doctor can refer you to a **Diabetes Centre** in your area. For the location of Diabetes Centres in Nova Scotia, visit the Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia website www.diabetescareprogram.ns.ca. This website will link you to other reliable diabetes websites.

Canadian Diabetes Association

The Nova Scotia Division of the Canadian Diabetes Association (**1-800-326-7712**) and their website (www.diabetes.ca) can direct you to valuable resources and information.

Your pharmacist

Your pharmacist will be happy to answer questions about diabetes, your meter, strips, and any medications you take.

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- The Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia's Diabetes Educators

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Diabetes Assistance Program

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