

Hemoglobin A1c Testing

Patient Education Material

WHAT IS A HEMOGLOBIN A1C (HBA1C)?

It is a lab test that shows the average level of your blood sugar (glucose) over the past 2-3 months.

It shows how well you are managing your diabetes.

More than likely, this test was already used to diagnose your diabetes (possibly with other tests).

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003640.htm>

WHY DO I NEED THIS IF I ALREADY MONITOR MY BLOOD SUGARS AT HOME?

This test shows how well you are controlling your diabetes over a 2-3 month period. It gives you the average of your blood sugars for that time period.

Your at-home glucose tests are a good way to monitor and allow you to adjust your medication doses and/or diet if needed.

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/A1CTest/>

IF I RECORD MY OWN SUGARS, WHY CAN'T I DO AN AVERAGE OF THAT?

While checking your blood sugars at home is helpful and allows you to take care of yourself at that moment, the HbA1c is still the most accurate indicator for the **AVERAGE** of blood sugars.

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/A1CTest/>

WHAT IS THE TEST LIKE?

It is a blood draw where a small amount of blood is drawn with a needle from a vein. Testing also could be done by a finger stick with a lancet (small needle). You may feel a slight pinch or stinging but it doesn't last long at all!

- It's also possible that you've already had one done if you've been diagnosed with diabetes.

www.diabetes.org

ONCE I GET STARTED, WILL I HAVE TO DO THIS ALL THE TIME?

Usually, healthcare providers recommend that you test every 3-6 months. Talk to your healthcare provider about how often he/she would like this done.

diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/AICTest/

HOW DO I GET THIS DONE?

If it has been at least 6-12 months or longer since you've had your HbA1c test, call your healthcare provider's office to talk about scheduling lab testing for this test.

If you are unsure if you've ever had this test, or when was the last time it was done, you can always call your healthcare provider's office to find out.

WHAT'S A NORMAL LEVEL FOR A HBA1C?

Diagnosis	A1C Level
Normal	Below 5.7 percent
Pre-diabetes	5.7 to 6.4 percent
Diabetes	6.5 percent and above

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WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES OF UNCONTROLLED DIABETES?

In general, the higher your HbA1c, the higher the risk that you will develop problems such as:

Cardiovascular disorders (leading cause of death)

Kidney failure and renal dialysis

Foot amputations

Blindness

Reduced life expectancy (often from heart disease)

Stroke

<http://diabetes.ygoy.com/2011/07/28/7-long-term-effects-of-uncontrolled-diabetes-mellitus/>

FOLLOWING UP IS A WISE CHOICE

Keeping up with this not only puts you on the path to improving your health, it helps you to make wise choices about your care.

It also helps your healthcare provider monitor your plan for diabetes more carefully!

RESOURCES

1. American Diabetes Association. (2013). A1C.

Retrieved from www.diabetes.org

2. Diabetes Health Center. (2012). The hemoglobin a1c (HbA1c) test for diabetes. Retrieved from

<http://diabetes.webmd.com/guide/glycated-hemoglobin-test-HbA1c>

RESOURCES

3. National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse. (2011). The A1C test and diabetes, 11-7816. Retrieved from

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/A1CTest/>

4. U.S. National Library of Medicine. NIH National Institutes of Health. Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia. (2012). HbA1c. Retrieved from

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