

HEALTH EDUCATION

A1C testing is important for everyone who has diabetes. Keeping your diabetes in good control helps you stay healthy and lower your risk of complications. A1C testing is one way to check how well you are managing your diabetes. It tells you what your blood sugar levels have been **over the past 2 to 3 months**.

What the Number Means

| If your A1C number is: | Your average blood sugar level has been: |
|------------------------|--|
| 5% | 80-111 |
| 6% | 112-140 |
| 7% | 141-168 |
| 8% | 169-197 |
| 9% | 198-226 |
| 10% | 227-254 |
| 11% | 255-283 |
| 12% | 284-308 |
| 13% | 309 or greater |

The A1C test is done at your doctor's office or in a lab. People without diabetes will have an A1C between 4 and 6%. Diabetes is diagnosed with an A1C of 6.5 or above.

How the Test Works

The A1C test measures how much sugar is attached to your hemoglobin molecule, which is a protein in a red blood cell that carries oxygen to your body. Sugar sticks to hemoglobin for the life of the molecule – about 90 to 120 days. More sugar sticks to your hemoglobin when there is more sugar in your blood. This results in a higher A1C number.

Effects of A1C Above 7%

The A1C goal for people with diabetes is less than 7% according to the American Diabetes Association. When you have an A1C test higher than 7%, your diabetes is not well controlled. High blood sugars over a long period of time can cause damage to large and small blood vessels.

The longer your diabetes is out of control, the more you are at risk for diabetes complications such as:

- Heart disease or heart attack
- Stroke
- Kidney disease or failure
- Eye disease or blindness
- Nerve damage
- Circulation problems
- Amputations
- Sexual dysfunction

You can help prevent these complications by keeping your diabetes in good control. Any drop in the A1C test reduces your risk for complications.

Illness, surgery, infection, or stress can raise your blood sugar and A1C. Your medicine or insulin may need to be adjusted.

Increasing your exercise and eating a healthier diet can have a big impact on lowering your A1C.

You cannot change your A1C test result in a day or two. It takes weeks of good diabetes management.

A1C Testing does not replace testing your blood sugar daily at home.

How often A1C should be tested

The American Diabetes Association recommends that the A1C test be done:

- Every 3 months if you have an A1C result greater than 7%.
- Every 6 months if your A1C result is less than 7%.

Everyone needs to know their number.

Work with your doctor or diabetes educator if your number is above 7%. Talk with them about any questions or concerns.

You can also check:

American Diabetes Association
diabetes.org