

DIABETES AND YOUR HEALTH NUMBERS

Soghra Jarvandi, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Tennessee

Numbers Important in Diabetes Care

Health care providers check several numbers to learn how much your diabetes is under control and to develop your treatment plan. You can decrease the risk of diabetes complications by knowing your health numbers and playing an active role in managing your diabetes. Talk to your health care provider about your health numbers and set your personal goals.

Blood Sugar

Blood sugar is measured by blood sugar checks at home and an A1C test in a physician's office.

Blood Sugar Checks

You check your blood sugar by using a blood glucose meter at home. This test shows the blood sugar level at the time of the test.



How many times should I check my blood sugar?

The frequency of checking blood sugar depends on your type of diabetes and the medications that you take. You should talk to your health care provider to see how often you should check your blood sugar. It is usually checked in the morning before breakfast (fasting), before meals and two hours after a meal, and at bedtime.

What numbers should I aim for?

The target levels of blood sugar for people with diabetes depends on the time of day that they do the test.

Blood sugar levels right
before meals
80 to 130 mg/dL

Blood sugar levels two hours
after the start of a meal
Less than 180 mg/dL

You should talk to your health care provider to find the target level of glucose that is best for you.

A1C Test

The A1C test shows the average control of blood sugar over the past two to three months. For many adults with diabetes, the A1C goal is less than 7 percent. You should talk to your health care provider to know the A1C goal that is best for you.

How often should I get an A1C test?

People with diabetes need an A1C test at least twice per year.

Blood Pressure

Blood pressure shows the force of blood against arteries during the heart beats. Blood pressure consists of two numbers: the top number is systolic pressure (the pressure when the heart beats) and the bottom number is diastolic pressure (the pressure when the heart rests). High blood pressure is defined as a sustained blood pressure equal to or greater than 130/80 mm Hg. If blood pressure remains high for a long time, it will increase the risk of stroke and heart disease. Most people with high blood pressure do not have any specific symptoms. Hence, many people are unaware they have high blood pressure until they check their blood pressure.

Talk to your health care provider about the target level of blood pressure for you. If you have high blood pressure, you should monitor it at home.



Blood Cholesterol

Your liver makes cholesterol. You also receive it from animal foods such as meat and poultry. Cholesterol is transported in the blood as two forms: LDL cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol) and HDL cholesterol (“good” cholesterol).

Too much cholesterol will increase your risk of heart attack and stroke. Many people with high blood cholesterol do not have any specific symptoms. Thus, it is important to have it checked. Talk to your health care provider about your cholesterol numbers.

Improve Your Health Numbers

Talk to your health care provider about health numbers and decide on a plan to improve them. This plan may include:

- Lifestyle factors:
 - Eat healthy food.
 - Maintain healthy weight.
 - Be physically active.
 - Don’t smoke.
 - Manage stress.
- Medications

What are your target numbers?

Blood Sugar
and A1C

Blood
Pressure

Blood
Cholesterol

Visit the following websites for more information on your health numbers:

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control: cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/manage-blood-sugar.html

American Heart Association: heart.org/en/health-topics/diabetes/prevention--treatment-of-diabetes/know-your-health-numbers

NIH-National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/managing-diabetes/know-blood-sugar-numbers



UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU

Real. Life. Solutions.™