

Getting Blood Sugar Levels Tested

Blood sugar is the amount of sugar you have in your bloodstream. It's also called blood glucose. Blood sugar comes from food you eat. Your blood cells carry sugar to cells to supply your body with energy. Cells can only take in your sugar if they have enough of the hormone insulin to help the process. Without insulin, sugar can't get into your cells. This results in sugar buildup in your bloodstream. That causes your body to work poorly.



What is a blood sugar level test?

Your body should naturally regulate the amount of blood sugar in your system. The amount of blood sugar in your system shouldn't be too high or too low. If you have Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, you have too much sugar in your system because you're not making enough insulin. Or, your body isn't using the insulin well. If you have low blood sugar, you may have hypoglycemia. This means you may have too much insulin in your bloodstream, missed eating, drank excessive amounts of alcohol or over-exerted yourself.

There are two types of blood sugar level tests:

- A1C test, which is done in a lab to test long-term average blood sugar levels if your doctor suspects diabetes
- Self-testing, which is done at home if you have Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes

When do I check my blood sugar?

To self-test your blood sugar levels, use a portable glucose meter at home. Your doctor will help you see how often you need to check your levels. Your doctor can also help you plan how often and when to check your blood sugar levels during the day.

Here's a typical schedule of when you might check:

- When you wake up
- Before a meal or snack
- 2 hours after every meal
- Bedtime

If you take insulin, you need to check your blood sugar more often than if you don't take insulin.

How do I check my blood sugar level?

Check your blood sugar by poking your fingertip with a blood glucose meter. Put a drop of blood onto a test strip that you insert into the meter. Your blood sugar level displays on the meter. Some meters let you poke other parts of your body for a blood sample, such as your thigh or the fleshy part of your palm. Look for spring-loaded lancing meters. These can be less painful to use.

How do I read my results?

Your blood sugar levels go up and down throughout the day. Your doctor can give you blood sugar target numbers based on your age, condition and other individual issues. It's important to create a log for your blood sugar level results. This way, you can see which foods and habits cause your blood sugar to fluctuate. This information helps you see if your diabetes plan is working or needs changes.

What target range should I aim for?

Target ranges are the blood sugar levels you should try to stick to. They're different for everyone who self-tests. Here are some common guidelines for target ranges if you have diabetes:

- Before breakfast (fasting) should range between 70 and 130.
- Before a meal or snack should range between 70 and 130.
- Two hours after meals should be under 180.
- Bedtime should range between 90 and 150.

If you want to learn more about blood sugar levels, tests or diabetes, visit [Mercy.com](https://www.mercy.com). You can make an appointment with a primary care doctor or diabetes specialist.

