

## Handy hints when testing your blood

- Prepare your equipment before pricking your finger.
- Always wash your hands in warm water before taking a blood test. This encourages blood flow and removes tiny particles of food which may affect your overall result.
- Do not use any kind of spirit to clean your skin; it will toughen it making testing more difficult and it may affect the result.
- Always use a finger pricker, as this controls how far the needle goes in.
- Avoid pricking your thumbs, index fingers and the tips/ central parts of the other fingers, as they are very sensitive and it may damage the nerves.
- Use a different finger and lancet on either hand each time, using the side of the finger pad of either the third, fourth or fifth finger.
- After pricking your finger wait five seconds to give the blood time to get to the surface. Then gently squeeze the finger from the base to the tip to get more blood.
- If you have difficulty collecting a drop of blood, put a little Vaseline on the relevant part of your finger tip before pricking it.
- Follow the instructions exactly for your blood testing machine.
- It is useful to record your results in a diary, as you will be able to see when they are normal and patterns of raised levels.
- Always dispose of lancets safely in a yellow sharps bin from your GP.
- Look after your meter and it will look after you. Keep it clean, store it well, calibrate it correctly and use the quality-control solution as directed.

# Monitoring your blood sugar levels





## Why should you monitor your blood sugar?

By using blood tests you can learn how the food you eat and the exercise you take affect your blood sugar levels. It can be very encouraging to see how sensible, healthy eating and gentle regular exercise can bring those levels down. You will also be able to spot problems at an early stage, if you are ill, for example, or if the time has come to start on tablets or insulin.

## What sugar levels should you aim for and how often should you test?

Discuss with the doctor and nurse at your practice how often you should take a blood test. Write your targets in the box below and record your results in a diary, as this will help you identify a pattern of when your blood sugar levels are high or low.

## What can cause your blood sugar levels to vary?

Many things can make your blood sugar rise too high. When you are using insulin or certain types of tablets, your blood sugar may also fall too low. These changes may not necessarily be within your control. The occasional unusual result may be nothing to worry about, but if it happens regularly you should check with your doctor or nurse.

**Your target blood sugar levels are:**

## Things that lower blood sugar levels

- Insulin injections
- Diabetes tablets
- Exercise
- Forgetting a meal or not eating enough
- Alcohol

## Things that raise blood sugar levels

- Overeating, especially starchy and sugary food
- Missing an insulin injection
- Missing a tablet
- Illness or infection
- Stress

## Equipment

Although glucose meters are available to buy, speak to your practice nurse, pharmacist or diabetes specialist nurse first. They will help you to decide which one suits your requirements as there are many to choose from.

If you are taking tablets to help lower your blood sugar levels, you don't have to pay prescription charges. This includes blood testing strips and lancets. Ask your GP for form FP92A.