



## Patient Information

# Monitoring Blood Glucose: A How-To for Kids

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Controlling your diabetes takes work. One of your biggest responsibilities is checking your blood glucose levels. Glucose is sugar in your bloodstream. It comes from two places — the food you eat and your liver. A hormone in your body called insulin keeps these glucose levels from getting too high. Diabetes occurs when your body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't make any insulin at all. This is why you might have to take insulin.

Glucose testing lets you know how much glucose is circulating in your body. If your sugar is too high or too low, the test will let you know so that you can get your glucose back to the right level. You or your parents should check your glucose about three to four times each day, or more often in certain situations, such as when you are sick or play sports. Check with your NP to see how many glucose tests a day are best for you.

### How Do I Choose a Meter?

Before you purchase a glucose meter, you should know a few things about it. First, is the meter easy to use? Make sure test strips are also easy to use. Make sure you know the size blood sample the meter needs — the smaller, the better. Some glucose meters on the market today don't require test strips or offer other features that make testing easier for children.

Depending on where you store your meter, size may be important. Make sure your meter is small enough to fit in a particular spot. The meter should also give accurate readings and be easy to clean.

Cost may also be an issue. For example, a meter may be one of the cheapest you can find, but the strips could be pretty costly over time. Make sure to consider all cost issues to determine whether you are getting the best deal. Your parents should also check whether meters or test strips are covered by your insurance company.

### How Do I Test Myself?

- Wash and dry your hands. Then get your meter ready. Each meter works differently, so make sure you are following the directions for your specific model. You can even check your glucose when you visit your NP so you can make sure you're doing it the right way.
- Choose the spot on your finger or arm that you will prick. Pick a

different finger each time. Prick the side of your finger, since this hurts the least and is less likely to bruise.

- Prepare your lancet and pricking device. These devices are all different, so make sure you know how to use yours correctly. Put the device against your finger, and press the button.

- Squeeze a drop of blood for the test strip. Blood is not always easy to get out. You may have to hang your hand down or squeeze or shake your finger — but do this very gently! Put the drop of blood on the test strip, and put the strip in the meter according to the directions.

- Record each result in your logbook. Make notes, such as whether you ate a big dinner or forgot to eat a snack.

### Where Do I Put My Used Supplies?

Since lancets are sharp, you cannot simply throw them in the trash can. Someone could get hurt. Instead, clean out a used container made of heavy plastic, such as a soda bottle or empty laundry detergent bottle. Put your used lancets in the bottle. Then, when it is about three-quarters full, seal it and call your trash company to see where it can be thrown away safely.

### What Should I Do When I'm at School?

Before the school year starts, your parents should have a meeting with the nursing or health staff at your school. They'll come up with a school plan for you. This way, you will know where and when you can test for glucose, where to get your insulin and who is trained to provide help if you need it, especially in an emergency.

### What About the Other Times I'm Away From Home?

Just because you have diabetes doesn't mean you can't go to sleepover parties or birthday celebrations. You just need to plan before you go. Try to find out what activities will take place — such as swimming or laser tag — and what food will be provided. This way, you can adjust your insulin if needed or bring snacks if there's going to be food you can't eat.

Finally, make sure you have a way to keep in touch with your parents. Give them a call sometime during the party to let them know how everything's going.

*Some information adapted from the American Diabetes Association Web site at <http://www.diabetes.org>.*

### Additional Notes:

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