Diabetes and Home Glucose Monitoring

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The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your health care provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.

Managing diabetes is a full-time job. For an estimated 16 million Americans with diabetes, a healthy diet, exercise, medication and self-monitoring of sugar levels are all part of a daily routine. For those individuals who can successfully maintain this lifestyle, the rewards are great — a significantly decreased incidence of diabetic complications.

MONITORING SUGAR LEVELS

To help prevent or delay serious health problems, individuals can take control of their condition through home blood glucose monitoring. This type of testing can help people with diabetes have a visible, objective measure about how food, physical activity and diabetes medicine affect glucose levels. Self-monitoring also alerts individuals to glucose levels that are too low or too high, allowing for faster treatment of these problems.

HOW TESTING WORKS

While you can do a test to find out your blood glucose levels at any moment, self-tests are usually done before meals and/or bedtime. To test your own blood, stick your finger with a lancet and squeeze the finger to get a small drop of blood. Place this drop of blood on a test strip, covering it completely, and then insert the strip into your glucose meter. The number shown on the meter is your blood sugar level. There are many types of blood sugar meters available, including those that allow users to obtain samples from parts of the body other than the fingers. The important thing to remember is to work with your health care provider to learn how to use your own personal meter.

BLOOD SUGAR GOALS

Good blood sugar levels for most people with diabetes who are self-testing include:

- before meals — 80-120 mg/dL;
- 2 hours after meals — 180 mg/dL or less; and
- at bedtime — 100-140 mg/dL.

However, your health care provider can help you determine a goal for your glucose range and when are the best times for testing.

KNOWING YOUR NUMBERS

Once you've gotten the number of your blood sugar level, you should record your glucose readings in a logbook. It's important to write down each glucose reading and the date and time it was taken. Your health care provider should give you parameters about when you should report low or high readings. When you review your records, you can see a pattern of your recent glucose control.

When your levels change, try and take note of changes in diet, exercise or general health that may have contributed to this change. Keeping accurate records will allow you to better manage your condition. Share your logbook with your health care professional during each visit.

GETTING THE SUPPLIES

You can receive diabetes equipment and supplies under Medicare; however, you must first obtain a prescription from your primary care provider. Medicare covers blood sugar meters, lancets and test strips. If you are in a Medicare health plan, check with the plan about whether there is a co-payment. You can pick up supplies at a pharmacy, hospital or clinic. You can also order them from a medical equipment supplier; however, you will need to order them. Do not accept automatic shipments from suppliers; you must always request refills. Medicare will not pay the cost of those supplies that are automatically sent to you without a request. ■

Resources

National Diabetes Program. *If you have diabetes, know your blood sugar numbers.* Retrieved Feb. 5, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://ndep. nih.gov/materials/pubs/know-numbers/know-numbers.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Taking charge of your diabetes.* Retrieved Feb. 5, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/ tcyd/ ktrack.htm

National Diabetes Program. *The power to control diabetes is in your hands.* Retrieved Feb. 5, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://ndep.nih.gov/materials/2001campaign/englishbrochure.pdf

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