

Glucose Meter Savvy

Using your meter often and correctly can help you transform your health by Kalia Doner



A glucose monitor allows you to have much more freedom about what you eat and how you exercise; keeping tabs on glucose levels throughout the day lets you adjust your medication and diet to keep glucose levels in the normal and near-normal range.

How Each Monitor Works

Each meter has slightly different way of functioning. Before buying one, you'll want to determine the amount of blood needed for each test and how long it takes to get results; how the meter stores test results in memory, the kinds of trends it can show you and how it interfaces with a computer; how calibration of the meter is done (if calibration is necessary); and the cost of the unit and the test strips.

Your Routine

Work with your doctor or diabetes educator to determine how often you should test. You may need to test more frequently if you use insulin, have an irregular schedule, exercise a lot, eat inconsistently or not on a schedule, or have brittle (difficult to control) diabetes. If you have type 2 and control your diabetes through diet, your doctor will advise you as to how often to test. If you're taking oral medication,

you may need to test one or more times a day. The American Diabetes Association recommends that those on insulin test three or more times a day: intensive testing would include before meals, two hours after meals, at bedtime, around 3 A.M., and any time symptoms are present. Those with gestational diabetes should test at least twice a day.

Using It Correctly

Set up an appointment with a diabetes educator to get a handle on all the intricacies of your new monitor. If calibration is necessary, it is essential that it be done correctly so you do not get too much or too little insulin.

When using your monitor, remember to:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water and dry completely. Clean area to be tested with alcohol and let it dry completely.
- Prick the fingertip or area to be tested with a lancet. Catch the blood with the test strip.
- Follow the instructions for inserting the test strip and using the meter.
- Record or download the test result.

How accurate are your readings?

The accuracy of your test results depends in part on the quality of your meter and test strips, as well as your training. Other factors that matter:

Hematocrit This is the amount of red blood cells in your blood. Those with higher hematocrit values usually test lower for blood glucose than patients with normal hematocrit.

Those with lower hematocrit values may test higher. Anemia and sickle-cell anemia are two conditions that affect hematocrit values. Certain substances may also have an effect: Check the package insert for your meter to find out more about possible variations in readings.

Temperature, humidity and altitude This trio can cause unpredictable effects on glucose results. Check the meter and test strip package inserts for information on these issues. Store and handle the meter and test strips according to the instructions. ■



Get Info

Ever heard of testing for microalbuminuria? It could save your kidneys. Learn about this and other diabetes-related tests to help you stay in control at RemedyLife.com/besure

