

Long-Term Complications and A1c Value

Along with the home blood glucose checks you do everyday, your healthcare team should perform an A1c blood test for you.

This blood test shows how well you have managed your blood glucose over the past two to three months and is done at your doctor's office or a lab.

People without diabetes have an A1c below 5.7%.

For someone with prediabetes their A1c is 5.7 to 6.4%.

And for people with diabetes your A1c level is above 6.5%.

"When I was diagnosed with diabetes my A1c level was 11; it was pretty high. My numbers were reading in the 300s so yeah."

When you are first diagnosed, your diabetes care team may perform an A1c test up to 4 times a year.

As you manage your blood glucose levels, an A1c test twice a year may give you an accurate picture of your blood glucose levels and ensure that you are reaching your goals.

For most people with diabetes consistently keeping your A1c readings below 7% gives you a better chance of delaying or preventing the long-term complications of diabetes like eye disease, heart disease, nerve disease, kidney disease, and amputation.

Here's a chart that can help you understand your A1c results. At 7% or lower you have a low risk of developing complications. At 8 and a half % you have double the risk and at 10% you have nearly four times the risk for complications.

For people over 70 or who are at risk of severe hypoglycemia, their healthcare provider may suggest a different, often higher A1c target.

To keep your A1c levels below 7%, you need to follow your diabetes management plan, which means making healthy food choices, getting physical activity, monitoring your blood glucose and taking medications if necessary.

"Take the meds; exercise; eat the right amount of foods; stay away from a lot of carbs, a lot of sweets, a lot of soda; drink more water, you can do it."

To better understand your A1c number, ask your diabetes care team what your estimated average blood glucose is. With a little math she can change your A1c percentage into a value like the one you see on your blood glucose meter.

For example, if your A1c is 7% your estimated average blood glucose is 154 mg/dl.

Together, you and your diabetes care team can use this number to see how close you are to reaching your blood glucose goals.

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If your A1c is higher than 7% or your target A1c level set with your diabetes care team, go over your management plan with your diabetes care team and make changes if needed.

Talk with them about any long-term health concerns you may have, and learn about some steps you can take, or goals you can set to help prevent the long-term complications of diabetes. Achieving your goals can help you live a long healthy life.

Although Diabetes is complex, it's manageable when you have the right information and support. Diabetes educators are trained to be your diabetes expert and can help you learn how to successfully thrive with diabetes. You deserve nothing less!

Ask your provider for a referral today! Find one at www.DiabetesEducator.org/find.