

Fact Sheet

Hemoglobin A1c

What is it?

The Hemoglobin A1c is a common blood test used to diagnose type 1 and type 2 diabetes in addition to gauging how well you are managing your diabetes.

What does it measure?

The A1c test results shows your average blood sugar level for the past two to three months. Specifically, the A1c test measures what percentage of your hemoglobin, which is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen, is coated with sugar. The higher your A1c level, the poorer your blood sugar control.

Why is it done?

- Used to diagnose pre-diabetes, type 1, and type 2 diabetes.
- Establishes a baseline A1c level for newly diagnosed patients.
- Assists in monitoring your diabetes treatment plan.

How to prepare for the test.

The A1c test is a simple blood test. You can eat and drink normally before the test. After your blood is drawn by a health care professional, the sample is sent to a lab for analysis. You can return to your usual activities immediately.

What do the results mean?

For someone without diabetes, a normal A1c level can range from 4.5% to 6%. When the A1c test is used for diagnosing diabetes, a level of 6.5% or higher on two separate tests indicates you have diabetes. A result between 5.7% and 6.4% is considered pre-diabetes, which indicates a high risk of developing diabetes. A person who has had uncontrolled diabetes for a long time may have an A1c level above 9%.



Pre-Diabetes, can I avoid diabetes?

Pre-diabetes means that your blood sugar level is higher than normal, but it is not yet high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes. The good news is that pre-diabetes can be an opportunity for you to improve your health. With healthy lifestyle changes such as eating healthy foods, adding physical activity into your day, and losing weight, you may be able to bring your blood sugar level back to normal.

Take Action now, prevent type 2 diabetes.

- Lose weight. As little as 5-7 pounds can make a big impact on your blood sugar levels.
- Eat a healthy, reduced calorie diet. Filling your plate with fresh fruits, vegetables and eating a lean protein, such as grilled chicken, is a good start to healthy eating. It is also important to reduce sugary drinks and snacks.
- Get more physical activity. Try to aim for 30 minutes of activity a day. If necessary, start in 10 minute increments three times a day.
- Avoid Smoking. Smoking increases kidney damage in people with diabetes in addition to raising your risk of cancer and heart disease.
- If you are taking medications, take them as instructed in order for them to be effective in controlling your blood sugar.
- Know your numbers. In addition to monitoring blood sugar, you should also know your blood pressure, and blood cholesterol numbers to make sure you are staying at healthy levels.