



Ask the Expert
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Q: My father was recently diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, and his physician told him to monitor his blood sugar at home twice a day. Can you explain why he has to do this and what the numbers mean?

A: Your blood sugar, or glucose, readings give you important information about how well your diet, medication, and exercise are working to keep your blood sugar in a target range. There are actually two sets of target goals: those of the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and those of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologist (AACE), as listed below. Your physician can help set targets that are appropriate for you.

Target Blood Sugar	ADA	AACE
Fasting or before meals	90-130 mg/dL	<110 mg/dL
Two hours after the start of a meal	<180 mg/dL	<140 mg/dL

As for when to check your blood sugar, it depends on what you want to learn. By checking before you go to bed and your fasting blood sugar first thing in the morning, you can determine if you are making adequate insulin during the night or if your medications are working to control your fasting sugars.

If you want to see how a meal impacts your blood sugar, check before and two hours after the start of that meal. Oftentimes, patients see a high post-meal blood sugar and assume it was caused by what they ate. In reality, they may have already been hyperglycemic (high blood sugar) prior to the meal. To see how physical activity changes your blood sugar, test before and after that activity. If you are having any symptoms of low blood sugar, such as shaking, sweating, fatigue, or vision changes, always check your blood sugar so you can treat your hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) appropriately.

If you have had a change in your diabetes medications, either the dose or the addition of a new medication, you may need to monitor your blood sugar more frequently to determine if the change is having the desired result of improved blood sugar control.

The goal of testing blood sugar is to look for patterns or trends. An isolated high blood sugar is not of great concern, whereas a trend of high or low blood sugars indicates that a change is needed in your management plan. You may need to change what you eat, how much you eat, your activity level, your medications, or a combination of these factors. The more data you have to share with your physician or healthcare provider, the better equipped they will be to help you make changes, improve your blood sugar control and your overall health.

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