

# Understanding Diabetes: The Basics

## BEFORE YOU BUY A METER

Self-blood glucose testing is a simple test that you can perform anytime and anywhere to find out your blood glucose level. Checking your blood glucose tells you and your doctor how food, physical activity, diabetes medication and stress change your blood glucose level.

**What supplies do I need for self-blood glucose testing?** You will need the following supplies to do a blood glucose test:

- a blood glucose meter,
- test strips for the meter you are using,
- lancets and a lancing device (tools used to get a small drop of blood),
- paper and pencil to record your results. Most meters come with a logbook.

### **How do I decide which meter to get?**

Your health care provider may tell you what brand of meter to buy. There are many different kinds of meters; some are easier to use than others. A diabetes educator can show you different meters and help you choose one. Some questions to think about as you look at meters are:

#### *Size and shape:*

Is the meter easy to hold? Can you see the numbers on the display screen?

#### *Is it easy to use?*

How do you turn the meter on? How many steps must you do before you get a test result?

#### *The strips:*

Can you hold and handle them easily? Can you open the bottle or foil wrap easily?

#### *Cost of the meter and the strips:*

Once you've bought a meter, you have to buy the strips that go with it.



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### *The meter's memory of test results:*

How much memory do you want? Do you want a meter that can connect to a computer? Meters with extra features generally cost more than simple meters.

### *The battery:*

Will you need to replace it? Is it easy to find in a store or do you have to special order it? What is the cost? Can you replace it yourself?

### **Buying a Meter**

Check with your insurance company before you buy a meter. You may need a prescription from your doctor in order for insurance to pay for it. Medicare Part B will pay for a meter and test strips only if you have a prescription for the supplies. Some insurance companies will only pay for a certain type of meter or number of strips. If you are paying for your own meter, you do not need a prescription. Meters can be bought at drug stores, medical supply stores or through mail order catalogs.

### **After You Buy A Meter**

*Learn how to use your meter.* A diabetes educator can teach you how. All meters come with instruction booklets and some with videos. Read the booklet and watch the video.

*Protect your test strips.* Sunlight, cold and humidity can ruin strips. Keep them in the box or bottle they came in. Close the box or bottle after taking out a strip. Do not use test strips past the date on the box (expiration date).

*Learn how to code your meter.* Be sure the code (usually a number) on the meter's display screen matches the code on the strips you are using. If not, you have to change the code on the meter. If the meter is not coded right, your test result will be wrong.

*Learn how to do control checks.* These tests will tell you if the meter is in good working order. Every meter has a toll-free number on the back. If you have questions, call the number.

### **How do I do a blood glucose test?**

- Have supplies ready: meter, lancets, lancing device, test strips, logbook, tissue or paper towel.

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water.
- You can massage your finger from its base (where it is attached to your hand) to the tip where you are going to poke your finger. This helps get the blood into the finger so you don't have to poke yourself more than once.
- Load your lancing device with a lancet. Hold the lancing device firmly to the tip of your finger and press the button.
- If you don't think there is enough blood; you can milk the finger from the base again. DO NOT squeeze the finger near the tip. This ruins the blood sample.
- Put the drop of blood on the test strip as the meter book shows.
- The amount of glucose will show on the display screen in 60 seconds or less.
- Record your result.

### **Where to learn more?**

The following books are available for loan to members of the Diabetes Association of Greater Cleveland. You may visit our library from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday — or check your local library.

J. Betschart: ***50 Ways to Manage Diabetes.*** Lincolnwood, IL, Publications Intn'l, 1998.

J. Bierman et al: ***The Diabetics Book.*** New York, NY, Penguin Putnam Inc. 1998.

- Ask your doctor, or diabetes educator.
- Contact the:



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