



MedStar Diabetes
Institute

Diabetes To Go

SURVIVAL SKILLS BASICS

When you have diabetes it is important to know the basics of how to take care of yourself. This information will help you to stay healthy and safe with diabetes.

Know Your Diabetes Numbers

Target blood sugar (glucose) for MOST people with diabetes:

- Your blood sugar before you eat should be from **80** and **140** mg/dL.
 - Your blood sugar AFTER you eat should be less than **180** mg/dL.
 - **Ask your doctor:** "What should my blood sugars be most of the time?"
 - Your **A1C** diabetes control number tells you the average of your blood sugars in the 2-3 months before the test was done.
 - For most people with type 2 diabetes the American Diabetes Association recommends an A1C **under 7%**.
 - **Ask your doctor:** "What should my A1C be?"
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Check your blood sugar every day!

- If you take pills for your diabetes, check your blood sugar two times a day. This should be before breakfast and one more time a day.
- If you take insulin: check your blood sugar when you wake up, before each meal and at bedtime.
- If your blood sugar is running high or if you are stressed or sick, check your blood sugar more often, like every 6 hours.
- Check any time you feel like your sugar might be too high or too low.
- **Ask your doctor:** "How many times a day should I check my blood sugar?"

What blood sugar is too HIGH (also called hyperglycemia)?

- Over **180** mg/dL for three or more readings in a week: Call your doctor.
- Over **300** mg/dL for 2 or more readings within 12-24 hours: Call your doctor at his/her office.

How will I feel if my blood sugar is too HIGH?

- You may feel very tired or thirsty, have blurry vision, need to pee more often, or be losing weight.
 - You may not feel any of these things when your blood sugar is high.
 - A blood sugar test is the best way to know what your sugar really is.
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What should I do if my blood sugar is too high?

- Drink plenty of water.
- If your blood sugar is high because you ate too much food or have been drinking sugary liquids like juice, regular soda or sweet tea, you need to:
 - Cut down on the amount of food you eat.
 - Stop the sugary drinks.
 - Check your sugar again later in the day to see if this helped.

How do I stop my blood sugar from getting too high?

- You can help stop your blood sugar from getting too high by taking your diabetes medicines, staying active, handling your worries and stress, seeing your doctor regularly, and eating healthy foods.
 - Don't drink juice, sweet tea, sugar-sweetened drinks, or regular soda.
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What blood sugar is too LOW (also called hypoglycemia)?

- Less than **70** mg/dL

How will I feel if my blood sugar is too LOW?

- You may feel shaky, sweaty, very hungry, confused, or have a fast heartbeat.
- If you have any of these feelings, check your blood sugar.

What should I do if my blood sugar is too LOW?

Low blood sugar needs to be treated right away!

- **Step 1:** Eat or drink 1 of these things:
 - ½ cup of juice or regular soda (NOT diet soda)
 - 1 cup of milk (skim is best)
 - 1 tablespoon of honey, sugar, jelly or syrup
 - 4 Starbursts or hard candies
 - Small box of raisins

LOW BLOOD SUGAR

- **Step 2:** Check your blood sugar every 15 minutes. If it is still below 70, eat or drink one more of the same choices to bring up your blood sugar until it is over 70.
 - **Step 3:** Eat the meal that you missed or a sandwich.
 - If you are having a lot of low blood sugars, **ask your doctor:** "Do my diabetes medicines need to be changed so I will not have so many lows?"
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What should I eat?

Here are some **healthy eating tips** to help keep your blood sugar under control. *Even small changes in what you eat and drink can help your sugars a lot.*

- Eat 3 meals a day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) and avoid eating seconds.
- Do not skip meals or eat snacks between meals.
- Eat less food at each meal.
- Drink calorie-free liquids such as water, diet soda, unsweetened tea, or coffee and avoid adding sugar to your foods.
- Replace sugar with sweeteners like Equal, Sweet n' Low, or Splenda.
- Stop eating foods that are high in sugar, such as cake, pie, doughnuts, sweetened cereal, honey, jam and jelly while you learn more about your diabetes and healthy eating.

When should I call my doctor right away or go to the emergency room?

- Blood sugar is **over 400** or HI or HHH, on your meter for two or more readings.
- Your blood sugar is **LOW** 2 or 3 or more times in one day.
- A low blood sugar has left you confused or someone needs to help take care of you.
- You have sickness or diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- Moderate or large urine ketones (if you have type 1 diabetes).
- You have any other medical problem that requires immediate help.

If you have questions about your diabetes after looking at this information: **Ask your care team** to answer them or ask if you can see a diabetes educator.

Metformin (Glucophage®)

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1-2%
Take by mouth	1 or 2 times every day with breakfast and/or dinner
Low blood sugar	Low risk (little to none)
Weight	No changes to small loss
Side effects	Mild nausea, diarrhea which usually goes away in a few weeks
Do not take	If you are very sick, admitted to the hospital, or having a procedure
Generic available?	Yes

DPP-4 Inhibitors (Tradjenta®, Januvia®, Onglyza®, Nesina®)

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 0.5-0.8%
Take by mouth	1 time every day
Low blood sugar	Low risk
Weight	No change
Side effects	Mild, very few
Do not take	If you have kidney trouble, you may need a smaller dose
Generic available?	No

Meglitinides (Starlix®, Prandin®)

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c .05-1.5%
Take by mouth	By mouth before each meal
Low blood sugar	Can cause low blood sugar
Weight	Some weight gain
Side effects	Nausea, diarrhea; cold or flu-like symptoms; joint or back pain; headache.
Do not take	If allergic reaction (hives, trouble breathing, swelling of face, lips, tongue) or severe stomach pain
Generic available?	Yes

Pioglitazone (Actos®)

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1-1.5%
Take by mouth	1 time every day
Low blood sugar	Low risk (No, or low if taken with other diabetes medicines)
Weight	Often goes up
Side effects	Ankle or leg swelling
Do not take	If you have CHF (heart failure) or get shortness of breath
Generic available?	Yes

SGLT-2 inhibitors (Farxiga[®], Invokana[®], Jardiance[®])

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1% or less
Take by mouth	1 time every day
Low blood sugar	Low risk (No, or low if taken with other diabetes medicines)
Weight	May lose some weight
Side effects	Urine infections, genital infections (like vaginitis); peeing more often; feeling dry or dizzy.
Do not take	If you feel very sick, or have ever had DKA (diabetic ketoacidosis)
Generic available?	Yes

Sulfonylureas (Amaryl[®], Glucotrol[®], Diabinese[®], Tolinase[®], Orinase[®])

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1-2%
Take by mouth	1 or 2 times every day
Low blood sugar	Yes
Weight	Often goes up
Side effects	Mild nausea, rash, diarrhea
Do not take	If you have allergy to sulfa drugs
Generic available?	Yes

Insulin

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1-2% or more
Take by shot	1 or more times every day with an insulin pen or vial and syringe
Low blood sugar	Yes
Weight	Often goes up
Side effects	Shot site bruising or redness
Do not take	Let your doctor know if you have had an allergy to any type of insulin
Generic available?	For some types of insulin

GLP-1s (Trulicity®, Byetta®, Bydureon®, Victoza®)

Blood sugar control	Decrease A1c 1-1.5%
Take by shot	1 or 2 times every day, or 1 time a week
Low blood sugar	Low risk (No, or low if taken with other diabetes medicines)
Weight	May lose some weight
Side effects	Mild nausea, diarrhea which usually goes away in a few weeks; shot site irritation
Do not take	If you have had pancreatitis or thyroid cancer; -or- If you get severe belly pain, vomiting.
Generic available?	No

TARGET

**MedStar Health
Glucose Control Initiative**



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