Frequently Asked Questions about Monitoring Blood Sugar

People who are new to blood sugar monitoring often ask “why?” Why do I have to test, and why do I need to record my numbers when my meter has a memory? The answers to these and other common questions follow. Be sure to ask your own questions of your healthcare provider so you know what you need to know to monitor your blood sugar as prescribed.

**Why do I have to check my blood sugar?**
Keeping diabetes in good control can help prevent problems in the future. Knowing your blood sugar level requires that you test it, rather than just relying on how you feel. When you know your level of control, you and your healthcare team can make decisions on your diabetes care plan.

**Why do I need to write down my numbers?**
Keeping a written record helps many ways. You can see trends in blood sugar levels over time by scanning the results you’ve recorded. You and your healthcare provider can see how your treatment plan affects your diabetes control. Then you can make the changes needed to achieve your targets.

**What should my numbers be at different times of the day?**
The American Diabetes Association provides guidelines of 70–130 mg/dL before meals and less than 180 mg/dL two hours after meals. You and your doctor will decide what your targets should be.

**What should I do if my results are out of my goal range for several days?**
Ask your diabetes care team when you should call if your blood sugar levels are not in your target range. The reasons for being out of range will determine what you need to do. Reasons may be a change in food and activity habits, missed doses of diabetes medicines, being sick, having a fever, and stressful or emotional times.
How can I get a sample of blood with very little pain?
Use the thinnest lancet that will allow you to get the size of blood sample you need for the test. Use a blood sugar meter that requires a very small blood sample. Set your lancing device to poke just deep enough to get a sample and not so deep that it is painful. The lower the number, the more shallow the poke. Some meters and their strips can be used to obtain blood samples from sites other than from the fingertips. Check the meter's user guide to learn where, how and when you may choose to get a blood sample from somewhere besides your fingertips.

How often should I test?
Follow your doctor’s advice. The goal is to check as often as needed to gain good control. You may need to test several times a day at first until your blood sugar begins to come under control. If you use insulin, you may continue to test several times a day. If you manage your diabetes with healthy eating and activity you may test just a few times a week. The key is using the results to gain control of your blood sugar.

When should I test?
Work with your diabetes care team for answers. Most people test before meals and at bedtime. Many doctors and diabetes care providers ask their patients to test after meals. Testing two hours after the start of a meal provides information on how well your treatment plan is working to keep your blood sugar in control in between meals. For example, if you eat at 5:30, check your blood sugar at 7:30.

Coverage for Meters and Strips
Medicare Part B covers most of the cost of testing once per day if you are not on insulin, and three times a day if you are on insulin. Medicare Part B will cover most of the cost for testing more often if your doctor has ordered it AND if you can provide a copy of your test results that shows you are testing as often as your doctor prescribed. With Medicare supplemental insurance, you may have no out-of-pocket costs. You can also download a 30-day log record from the www.optumrx.com/diabetes website.

*Medicare Part B reimburses up to 80%, and most Medicare-supplemental plans pay up to the remaining 20%. Deductibles and coinsurance may apply. Assignment is accepted, which means we accept direct reimbursement from Medicare.