



The A1C Test for People with Type 2 Diabetes

This handout will help you to learn about the A1C test: what it is and why it is important for people with type 2 diabetes.

Q What is the A1C test?

The A1C test is a blood test that shows the average amount of glucose in your blood over the past 3 months. Your A1C level is shown as a percentage: for example, 6.8%. This is different than the numbers that you see when you check your blood glucose at home. These numbers, which are shown in *milligrams per deciliter*, or mg/dL, give you a snapshot of your blood glucose level at that moment.

| A1C % | Estimated average glucose mg/dL |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 6.5 | 140 |
| 7 | 154 |
| 7.5 | 169 |
| 8 | 183 |
| 8.5 | 197 |
| 9 | 212 |
| 9.5 | 226 |
| 10 | 240 |

Because people with type 2 diabetes are used to seeing blood glucose numbers, it can be confusing to understand what the A1C test result means. The chart on the left lists A1C levels in one column and the average estimated glucose in the next column. For example, if your A1C is 8.5%, that means that your average blood glucose over the past 3 months has been around 197 mg/dL.

Because the A1C number tells you about your blood glucose day and night, before and after meals over 3 months, your average blood glucose may not match the numbers on your glucose meter. This is the reason why the A1C test is so important: it gives you different information about your blood glucose than you get when you check your own blood glucose day-to-day.

Q What should my A1C and estimated average glucose levels be?

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends an A1C level of less than 7% for most adults with type 2 diabetes, which is an estimated average glucose of 154 mg/dL. No matter what your A1C is, the closer you get to 7%, the better your chances for preventing health problems from diabetes.

A1C level of less than 7%

Q How often should my A1C be tested?

The ADA recommends two A1C tests per year for people with type 2 diabetes whose glucose levels are at goal. Your healthcare provider may test your A1C more often if you are not at your goal level.

REFERENCES: American Diabetes Association (ADA). A1C and eAG. Available at: <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/blood-glucose-control/a1c/>. • ADA. Standards of medical care in diabetes—2013. *Diabetes Care*. 2013;36(suppl 1):S11-S66. • DiabetesPro. Estimated average glucose, eAG. Available at: <http://professional.diabetes.org/glucosecalculator.aspx>. • National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse. The A1C test and diabetes. Available at: <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/A1CTest/>. Websites accessed November 15, 2013.

For your next visit

Use the space below to write down your current A1C and estimated average glucose levels, the goal levels that you and your healthcare provider agree upon, and any questions that you would like to ask.

| A1C | Estimated average glucose |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| My current levels | |
| My goal levels | |
| My questions: | |
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TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER
OR VISIT WWW.NDEI.ORG**