



MedStar Diabetes
Institute

Diabetes
To Go
SURVIVAL SKILLS BASICS



Staying on Top of Your Diabetes

Before you leave the doctor's office or hospital, make sure you have:

- A prescription for your diabetes medicine(s)
- A prescription for your blood sugar meter and test strips to check your blood sugar
- An appointment to return to see the doctor who takes care of your diabetes

What is Diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes: Your body does not make insulin. This is a problem because you need insulin to take the sugar from the foods you eat and turn it into energy for your body. You need to take insulin every day to live.

Type 2 diabetes: Your body does not make or use insulin well. You may need to take pills or insulin to help control your diabetes. Type 2 is the most common type of diabetes.

Other Kinds of Diabetes

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that starts when you are pregnant.

Steroid diabetes is caused by a group of medicines including prednisone and hydrocortisone which can make your blood sugar go up.

If you have had **surgery that removed your pancreas** (where insulin is made) **or if your pancreas has been damaged for another reason**, then you will also have diabetes.

Checking Your Blood Sugar



Using Your Blood Sugar Meter

- **You use a blood sugar meter to check your blood sugar.** This machine uses a small drop of blood from your finger to check your blood sugar. You can get the meter and supplies in a drug store or sent to your house.
- If you don't have a blood sugar meter, ask your nurse for help in getting one.



Until You See Your Doctor, Check Your Blood Sugar Every Day!

- **When you see your doctor, ask how many times a day you need to check your blood sugar.**
- **If you are taking pills to help control your diabetes,** check your blood sugar 2 times a day. This should be before breakfast and one more time during the day.
- **If you are taking insulin,** check your blood sugar when you wake up and again before each meal and just before bedtime.
- **If your blood sugar is running high—OR—if you are stressed or sick,** check your blood sugar more often, like every 4 to 6 hours.



Write Down Your Blood Sugar Numbers

- You should write down your blood sugar when you take them.
- Ask for a book to write down your blood sugar if you don't have one.
- Bring the blood sugar book and meter to your visits for diabetes.



Getting a Drop of Blood from Your Finger

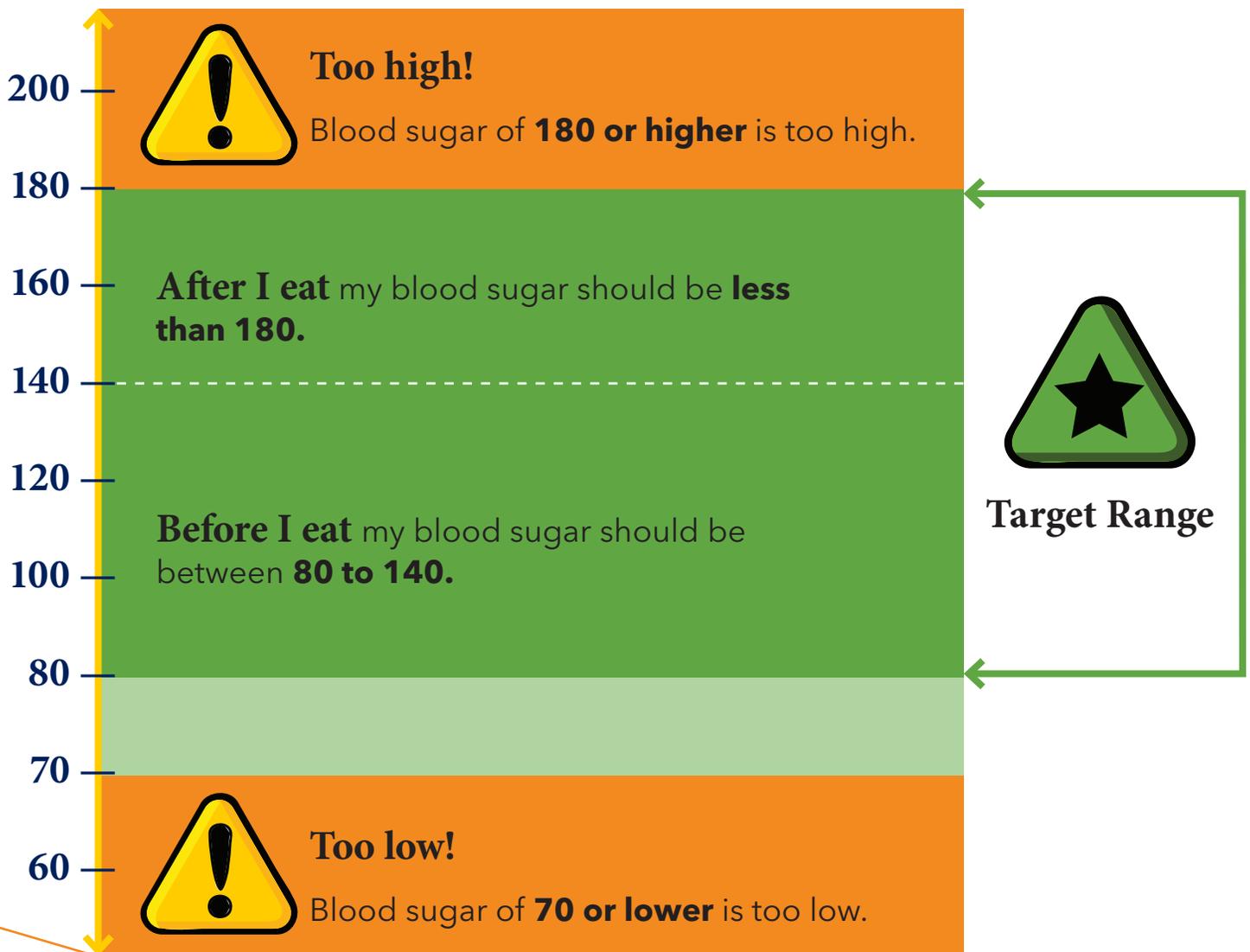
- Wash your hands with warm soapy water and dry them—or—use an alcohol pad to wipe your fingertip.
- Let your hand hang down at your side for a few seconds.
- Lightly rub the tip of the finger to help the blood flow.
- You are now ready to get a drop of your blood to test your sugar.

What Should My Blood Sugar Be?

Your blood sugar will change every day but should not be too high or too low.

Most of time:

1. Your blood sugar BEFORE you eat should be anywhere from **80 to 140**.
2. Your blood sugar AFTER you eat should be **less than 180**.
3. Blood sugar of **70 or lower is too low**.
4. **Ask your doctor:** *What should my blood sugar be most of the time?*



Know About High Blood Sugar



What is High Blood Sugar?

- High blood sugar is also called hyperglycemia (sounds like hype-per-gly-see-mee-uh).
- This means your blood sugar is over 180 and it is too high.



How Will I Feel if My Blood Sugar is Too High?

- You may feel very tired or thirsty, have blurry vision, or need to pee more often.
 - If you have these feelings, check your blood sugar.
- You may not feel any of these signs of high blood sugar. A blood sugar test is the best way to know what your blood sugar is.



What Should I Do if My Blood Sugar is Too High?

- Drink plenty of water.
- Call your doctor if your blood sugar is over 300 for two or more readings within 12 to 24 hours.
- If you have more than 3 blood sugar in one week over 180, you should call your doctor to ask what to do about it.
- If your blood sugar is high because you are eating too much, cut back on the amount of food you eat and check your blood sugar to see if it helps.



How Do I Stop My Blood Sugar from Becoming Too High?

- You can help stop your blood sugar from getting too high by taking your medicines, staying active, handling your worries and stress, seeing your doctor often, and eating healthy foods.
- AVOID juice, sweet tea, sugar-sweetened beverages and soda.

Know About Low Blood Sugar



What is Low Blood Sugar?

- Low blood sugar is also called hypoglycemia (sounds like hype-poh-gly-see-mee-uh).
- This means your blood sugar is below 70 and it is too low.
- **Low blood sugar needs to be treated right away.**



How Do You Feel if Your Blood Sugar is Too Low?

- You may feel shaky, sweaty or very hungry, 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?

- There are three steps to taking care of a low blood sugar.
 - **Step 1:** Eat or drink **1** of these things:
 - ◆ 1 cup of milk
 - ◆ Half a cup of juice or regular soda (NOT diet soda)
 - ◆ 3-4 sugar tablets
 - ◆ 1 tube of sugar gel
 - ◆ 1 tablespoon of honey, sugar, jelly, or syrup
 - ◆ 4 Starbursts®
 - ◆ Small box of raisins
 - **Step 2:** Check your blood sugar every 15 minutes. If it is still below 70, eat or drink one of the same choices to raise your blood sugar until it is over 70.
 - **Step 3:** Eat the meal that you missed or a sandwich.



How to Stop My Blood Sugar from Becoming Too Low

- Make sure you eat your meals on time and don't skip meals.
- If you are going to have a busy day with more activity, take a small snack such as:
 - Peanut butter crackers
 - Piece of fruit
 - Granola bar
- If you have low blood sugar often, talk with your doctor. Your medicines may need to be changed.

What Should You 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 a lot.

Healthy Eating Basics

- Eat 3 SMALL meals a day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner).
- Do not skip meals.
- Drink calorie-free liquids such as water, diet soda, unsweetened tea or coffee.
- Replace sugar with sweeteners like Equal®, Sweet n' Low®, or Splenda®.

Stop eating foods high in sugar. Stop eating some foods you may usually eat while you learn more about your diabetes.

- Fruit juices, regular soda or sweet tea
- Foods high in sugar like cakes, cookies, pie, doughnuts, sweetened cereal, honey, jam, jelly, ice cream or candy
- Snacks between meals
- Eating "seconds"
- Adding sugar to your foods

Getting Help with Healthy Eating

If you haven't met with a dietitian yet, ask your doctor to send you to one. The dietitian will help you make healthier choices that you will enjoy.

Taking Care of Your Diabetes When You are Sick

When you have diabetes and become sick or stressed, you may notice that your blood sugar levels run high.

- Know the signs for high blood sugar (above 180) and low blood sugar (below 70).
- Test your blood sugar before meals and at bedtime.
- If you are NOT eating and your blood sugar is over 200, be sure to check your blood sugar every 6 hours.

Sick Day Foods

There are simple steps to help control your blood sugar when you are sick.

- Drink: 1 cup of water or calorie-free and caffeine-free fluid every hour.
- If you can't eat solid food at your usual meal, try sipping small amounts of juice or regular soda all the day.
- If you can eat, try soft, plain foods that are easy to eat:
 - Regular Jell-O® (NOT sugar-free)
 - Clear soup
 - Hot cereal
 - Toast
 - Applesauce
 - Pudding
 - Yogurt
 - Sherbet
 - Popsicles (NOT sugar-free)

What About Medicines on Days I am Sick?

- What about diabetes pills?
 - Ask your doctor if you should take your diabetes pills when you are sick.
 - You can still take some diabetes pills
 - There are some pills you should not take when you are sick, especially when you are not eating.
- What about insulin?
 - Ask your doctor how much insulin you should take when you are sick.
 - If you have type 1 diabetes, always take your insulin.
 - If you have type 2 diabetes, you will usually need to keep taking your long acting insulin.
 - If you are taking meal-time insulin you may need to change the number of units you take based on your blood sugar.

Call the Doctor or Go to the Hospital Right Away If:

- Your blood sugar is **HIGH** (HI, HHH, or over 400) for 2 or more readings.
- Your blood sugar is **LOW** 2 or 3 times in one day.
- Your 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.
- You have any other medical problem that requires immediate help.

Diabetes Medicines – Pills

How Diabetes Pills Work

Diabetes pills:

- Lower the amount of blood sugar your body makes
- Increase the amount of insulin that your body makes
- Make the insulin that your body makes work better

There are many kinds of pills to help manage your blood sugar. They do not all work the same way in your body, but there are some things that you can do to help them work their best no matter what pill you are taking.

- Drink plenty of water.
- Talk to your doctor about the special things you need to know about the pills **you** take.
- Follow the directions from your doctor for taking the pills.
- Talk to your doctor if can't get your pills, or if they cost too much money. There may be ways to help you still get the pills you need.

Diabetes Medicines – Insulin

Many people with diabetes take insulin to help control blood sugar. Insulin is given with a needle and syringe.

Types of Insulin

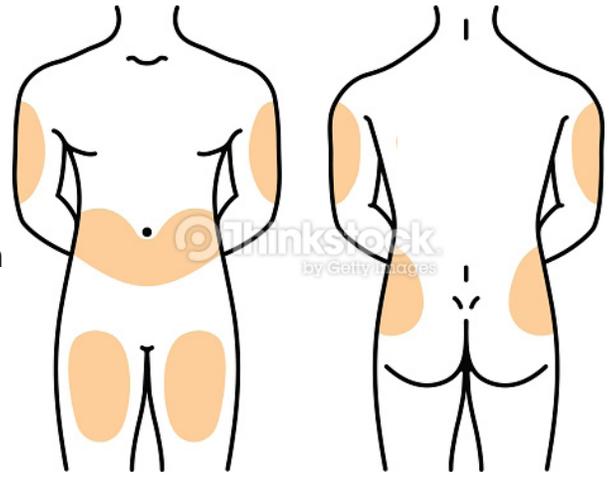
- 24-hour insulin or long-acting insulin
 - Controls blood sugar between meals and overnight
 - Begins to work slowly and lasts for many hours
 - Is taken one or two times a day
- Meal-time or correction insulin
 - Controls blood sugar after you eat
 - Brings blood sugar down if it is are high
 - Is taken with meals OR when your blood sugar is high
 - Begins to work quickly and lasts only a few hours

Storing Insulin

- Keep unopened insulin in the fridge.
- You can keep the bottle of insulin that you are using in the fridge or at room temperature.
- The insulin pen you are using should be kept at room temperature.

Taking Insulin Shots

- If you take insulin, ask your nurse or pharmacist. After they show you, show them how you give the insulin yourself.
- Insulin shots may be given in your stomach area, the outer side of your upper arm, your thigh, or your hip area.
- The time and amount of insulin is different for each person.



When you give yourself an insulin shot, stay one inch away from where you gave your last shot of insulin.

When You Have Finished Taking Your Insulin Shot

- Put all needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container right away.
 - You can use a metal can (like a coffee can) or hard plastic container (like a laundry detergent or large plastic milk jug) for this.
 - When it is full, make sure it is closed tightly or sealed with duct tape before throwing it away so the needles cannot fall out.
- Check with your pharmacist to find out how to throw these containers away when they are full. This will be based on where you live.



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