



Lifestyles for **Diabetes**

The A1c ... what's in it for me?

What is hemoglobin A1c?

Hemoglobin is a substance in your red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to cells in your body. It can bind or join to sugars such as glucose. The hemoglobin attached to sugar molecules is called hemoglobin A1c. As a person with diabetes, it's important for you to get a blood test for hemoglobin A1c regularly, to measure your average blood glucose level over a period of several months.

The lower the percentage of hemoglobin A1c in your blood, the better you've controlled your diabetes. The goal for people with diabetes is a result of less than 7 percent. For people without diabetes, the normal range is 4 to 6 percent. If your hemoglobin A1c is higher than 7 percent, you are more at risk of developing complications from diabetes.

Why should I have it tested?

Monitoring your blood glucose every day is important, but the A1c test is the most accurate way to tell how well your treatment program is working over time. The results of a hemoglobin A1c test can tell if your management plan — including your diabetes medicines, meal plan, and exercise routine — is controlling your diabetes. Based on the results, your doctor may change your management plan.

Most people with diabetes should have an A1c test at least twice a year, but your doctor will decide how often is best to monitor your diabetes control.

Sources: *Health A to Z* and *WebMD*

Care for your kidneys

Because you have diabetes, you're at risk of developing diabetic nephropathy, a serious kidney disease. As kidney damage progresses, your kidneys cannot remove the waste from your blood, creating a potentially poisonous buildup in your body.

Your doctor can detect diabetic nephropathy by testing the levels of protein in your urine. You should get this test once a year, as well as a blood test to check for creatinine. These two tests will show how well your kidneys are working.

Although there are often no symptoms of early kidney damage, symptoms of more serious kidney damage include:

- Swelling of the hands, feet and face
- Weight gain
- Blood in the urine
- Abnormalities in your heart's regular rhythm
- Muscle twitching
- Itching and extremely dry skin
- Drowsiness

Nephropathy is often accompanied by high blood pressure. Controlling your blood pressure and blood sugar can slow the progression of diabetic nephropathy. Some medicines can also help treat this condition and slow kidney damage. Talk to your doctor about how you can protect your kidneys.

Source: *WebMD* and *National Institutes of Health*



Did you know?

You should have your eyes examined by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) at least once a year to keep your eyes healthy and to prevent, discover or treat any problems associated with diabetes. This is different from having a vision test.

Don't be in the dark about your diabetes

Eye care is an important part of managing your diabetes. To prevent and control diabetes-related eye problems, you should monitor and control your blood sugar and high blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about any eye problems such as blurry vision or seeing black spots, flashes of light or holes. Your eye doctor can recommend how frequently you should get regular exams, including dilated-eye exams.

Three kinds of eye problems that are common in people with diabetes include diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and glaucoma. If you develop blurred vision, see your eye doctor. Blurred vision can be a symptom of temporary eye problems, such as blurriness caused by high blood glucose, or it could be something more serious.

Diabetic retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy damages the blood vessels of your retina and can lead to blindness. Because there are no symptoms, it can be diagnosed only during an eye exam. You can reduce your risk of this disease by improving your blood sugar control.

Cataracts


Cataracts cloud or fog the clear lens of your eye, which helps you see and focus. This clouding causes blurry or glared vision. Although anyone can get cataracts, people with diabetes can develop cataracts at an earlier age.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma damages the optic nerve. It increases fluid pressure inside the eye, causing vision loss. In the most common form of glaucoma, there may be no symptoms until the disease is advanced. By then, there is already significant vision loss. Symptoms may include headaches, eye aches or pain. Other symptoms may include blurred vision, watering eyes, halos around lights and loss of vision.

An annual glaucoma screening from your eye doctor can help detect glaucoma early. This is when treatment is most successful. Make an appointment with your eye doctor if it's been more than a year since you last visited. Ask your eye doctor to share your results with your primary care physician.

Sources: *Health A to Z* and *WebMD*



Checkups

Have you had the following screenings, exams and shots within the last year?

- Blood pressure
- HbA1c
- Total cholesterol
- LDL
- HDL
- Foot exam
- Flu shot
- Dental exam
- Urine microalbumin
- Diabetes eye exam

These are general suggestions. Check with your primary care physician about how often you need these services.

- Also, check with you doctor to see if your pneumonia shot is up to date.

Diabetes and smoking: double trouble

Most people are aware that smoking causes cancer. For people with diabetes, the risks of smoking are even greater and make the health problems you face even more challenging. Besides the obvious risks, if you smoke and have diabetes you're more likely to:

- Damage your blood vessels. This makes foot ulcers worse and can lead to leg and foot infections.
- Get neuropathy (nerve damage) and kidney disease.
- Die of cardiovascular disease.
- Have high blood pressure.
- Raise your blood glucose level, making it harder to control your diabetes.
- Damage your kidneys.

If you are a smoker, one of the best ways you can prevent diabetes complications is to quit. Our Quit the Nic program offers the tools and support you need to help you succeed. Call 800-811-1764 or 800-240-3050 (TTY) to register. Nurses are available 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday to help you develop a plan to quit.

Source: *Health A to Z, WebMD and LifeWire*



Creamy pumpkin soup

Pumpkins are for more than just carving! In addition to muffins and quick breads, canned or fresh pumpkin can be used to make delicious soups and side dishes. Low in calories and high in fiber, pumpkins are also loaded with disease-fighting antioxidants. Serves six.

Ingredients:

Cooking spray

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 large onion, diced medium

3 stalks celery, diced medium

2 carrots, diced medium

2 cups pumpkin, fresh (cooked) or canned

6 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth

½ teaspoon curry powder

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch of clove

1 cup low-fat milk

Salt, to taste (optional)

Spray the bottom of a large pot with cooking spray and add olive oil. Add onion, celery and carrots. Sauté for about 5 minutes to soften vegetables and bring out flavor.

Add pumpkin, broth and spices. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Simmer for 30 minutes and remove from heat. Let cool for 15 minutes.

Puree soup in blender and return to pot. Whisk in low-fat milk and reheat before serving. Add salt if desired.

Source: *Health A to Z*

Nutritional information per serving

| | |
|---------------|--------|
| Calories | 125 |
| Fat | 3 g |
| Saturated fat | .5 g |
| Protein | 4 g |
| Carbohydrates | 20 g |
| Fiber | 3 g |
| Sodium | 245 mg |
| Cholesterol | 2 mg |



A nonprofit corporation and independent licensee
of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Mail Code C226
P.O. Box 5043
Southfield, MI 48086-5043

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BLUE CROSS
BLUE SHIELD
OF MICHIGAN

How to reach us

If you have any questions about this program, if you feel you have received this information in error or if you would prefer not to receive more information, call the Disease Management department. Please call to inquire about our resources for members with special needs.

Disease Management programs

800-392-4247

800-257-9980 (TTY)

8:30 a.m. to 5 pm. Monday through Friday

Customer Service

Call the number on the back of your ID card

BlueCaid of Michigan is a nonprofit corporation and independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Blue Care Network provides health management programs on behalf of BlueCaid members.

