

How to Use a Glucometer



Whether you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, at-home blood-sugar monitoring devices called glucometers can give you valuable information about whether your blood sugar is too low, too high, or in a good range for you. These portable electronic devices provide you with instant feedback and let you know immediately what your blood sugar is.

Regular monitoring is a particularly helpful way to manage your diabetes and help control your blood sugar, so it's important to know how to properly use the device.

When to Test

Discuss with your doctor how often and at what times of the day you should be testing and what to do if your results are low or high. Your testing frequency may depend on your specific type of diabetes and your personal treatment plan.

What You Need to Use a Glucometer

- Alcohol prep pad (or soap and water if you have access to a sink)
- Lancet
- Test strip
- Glucometer
- Log/notebook to record results



Glucometer Usage Instructions

1. First, set out your glucometer, a test strip, a lancet, and an alcohol prep pad.
2. Wash your hands to prevent infection. If you are not by a sink, use the alcohol swab. If you are by a sink and wash your hands thoroughly, usage of an alcohol swab is recommended.

3. Sometimes it helps to warm your hands first to make the blood flow easier. You can rub your hands together briskly or run them under warm water—just be sure to dry them well as wet hands can dilute the blood sample, resulting in a lower number.
4. Turn on the glucometer and place a test strip in the machine when the machine is ready. Watch the indicator for placing the blood on the strip.
5. Make sure your hand is dry and wipe the area you've selected with an alcohol prep pad and wait until the alcohol evaporates.
6. Pierce your fingertip on the side of your finger, between the bottom of your fingernail to the tip of your nail (avoid the pads as this can pinch more). The type of drop of blood required is determined by the type of strip you are using (some use a "hanging drop" of blood versus a small drop for strips that draw blood in with a capillary action).
7. Place the drop of blood on or at the side of the strip.
8. The glucometer will take a few moments to calculate the blood sugar reading. Follow your doctor's orders for whatever blood sugar reading you get.
9. You may use the alcohol prep pad to blot the site where you drew the blood if it is still bleeding.
10. Write down your results. Keeping a record makes it easier for you and your doctor to establish a good treatment plan. Some glucometers can store your results in a memory, for easier record keeping.

Common Problems to Avoid

It's important to regularly maintain your glucose meter to avoid potential problems. Follow these tips to ensure good functioning:

- Make sure you keep batteries in stock that fit your glucometer.
- Make sure your test strips are not expired, as expired test strips can provide an inaccurate result.
- After taking a test strip out, close the lid tightly. Too much light or moisture can damage the strip.
- Clean your device at regular intervals and run quality-control checks when prompted.

Disposing of Sharps/Biohazard Materials

Dispose of your lancets in a puncture-proof container, preferably a red sharps container that is made for that purpose. You can get one from your doctor or pharmacy. If none is available, use a thick, plastic laundry detergent bottle with a screw-on cap, to prevent needle-stick accidents. Many hospitals and pharmacies have a sharps drop-off program where you can bring your container when it is full.

When Traveling

- If you're traveling for several days, bring a hard plastic pencil case with you to store your discarded lancets in and bring them back with you until you can properly dispose of them.
- Make sure you always have a small stash of fast-acting carbohydrate snacks, extra insulin, or additional medication in case of emergency.