

YOUR CARE POLMED

August 2020



Hba1c Testing An important step in managing your diabetes



± 4.5 million = diabetics
2nd leading cause of natural death = diabetes

It's important to manage your diabetes, as not doing so can be dangerous for your health. Your **bi-annual HbA1c test** will help you mitigate the risk of uncontrolled diabetes.

DANGERS OF UNCONTROLLED DIABETES

Uncontrolled diabetes can increase the risk of:



Nerve damage



Heart disease



Gum disease



Vision loss



Kidney disease



Amputations

MANAGING DIABETES: REGULAR CHECK-UPS

Regular check-ups help provide a picture of the impact of diabetes on your health – a common test used is the HbA1c test.



Purpose of an HbA1c test

- Measures the level of glycated haemoglobin, which develops when haemoglobin (red blood cells that carry oxygen) joins with glucose in the blood.
- Shows the long-term effectiveness of your diabetes treatment.
- A high HbA1c reading means a higher risk of diabetes-related complications such as organ damage.



Finger-prick glucose test versus HbA1c test

- A finger-prick glucose test is done at least once a day, while the HbA1c test is done at least twice a year (every 6 months).
- A finger-prick glucose test measures blood sugar levels at the moment of your test to track everyday progress, while the HbA1c test gives the average blood sugar levels over a longer period (2 to 3 months).
- Unlike the finger-prick glucose test, no fasting is needed for an HbA1c test.



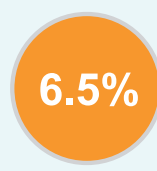
How to do an HbA1c test

- Your doctor will take a blood sample from your arm and assess it.
- The higher your average blood sugar levels over the preceding few weeks, the greater your HbA1c level will be.



How often should HbA1c levels be tested?

- Test at least twice a year (every 6 months).
- Put a reminder in your diary, cellphone calendar or an app for your next test.



6.5%

HbA1c targets

- For people without diabetes, the normal HbA1c level is **below 6% (42 mmol/mol)**.
- HbA1c levels for diabetics can fluctuate between **6% and 8% (42 mmol/mol and 64 mmol/mol)**.
- A healthy HbA1c reading for a diabetic should be **6.5% (48 mmol/mol)**.

* Patients with pre-existing conditions may have different target ranges for HbA1c levels based on clinical guidelines.

CONTROLLING HbA1c LEVELS

Lowering HbA1c levels can help prevent diabetes complications and reduce the risk of:

Eye disease

BY
76%

Nerve damage

BY
60%

Heart attack or stroke

BY
57%

Kidney disease

BY
50%

The best ways to control HbA1c levels include medication, diet and exercise.



Medication

- Medication prescribed by your doctor helps to **manage diabetes**.
- The medication will help to **regulate insulin levels and reduce HbA1c levels**.
- Always **take your medication as prescribed** and only stop taking your medication on your doctor's orders.
- Make sure to **refill your prescription** before your medication is finished.



Diet

It's important to eat foods that will help to prevent blood glucose spikes:

- **Wholegrain foods** such as wholegrain bread, rolled oats, unrefined maize, and barley.
- It's best to eat, on average, **5 fruit and/or vegetable portions** per day:
 - Vegetables such as sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and butternut.
 - Low-sugar fruit options like kiwis, grapefruits, and avocados.
- **Nuts** such as almonds and walnuts.
- **Cold-water fish** like salmon and sardines.
- **Legumes** such as chickpeas, beans, lentils, and peas.

Avoid these foods and drinks:

- **Fast foods** and **processed foods**.
- **Sweet treats**.
- **Alcohol** and **sugary drinks** such as fruit juice and sodas/fizzy drinks.



Exercise

- Exercise can help to **control blood sugar levels**.
- Diabetics need at least **150 minutes of physical activity** every week.
- Brisk walking, jogging, cycling and dancing are great **cardiovascular exercises**.
- Aim to include **strength training** two to three times a week.

Polmed scheme covers HbA1c tests as part of your diabetes care plan. For more information please contact the Polmed Client Service Call Centre on 0860 765 633 or send an email to polmedapmb@medscheme.co.za.

References

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If you have any questions or need more information, please call POLMED on 0860 765 633 (select the option for the Disease Management Programme), or send an email to polmeddisease@medscheme.co.za with your membership number and contact details.