

## ISJ HEALTHY LIVING

## Monitoring blood sugar with the help of your pharmacist

Diabetes affects 23 million Americans or 7.8 percent of the population. It is a disease resulting in high levels of blood sugar (also called blood glucose) that is caused by either problems with your body's ability to make insulin, use the insulin or both. It can lead to complications with the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart. It can even result in premature death. Self-monitoring with a blood glucose monitor to achieve good control is an important way you can reduce the risk of these complications.

Monitoring your blood sugar is as simple as following these few steps:

- Gather your glucose meter and sterile lancets (sharp, small needles).
- Clean hands are very important, so wash and dry them.
- Insert the test strip into your meter.

- Prick your finger with a new lancet. It is less painful to use the side and not the tip.

- If you have trouble getting a drop of blood, put your hand under hot water to get the blood flowing, let your hand dangle below your heart for a minute, or squeeze from the base of your finger to the tip after pricking.

- Once you have a drop of blood, place it on the test strip.

- The meter will display your blood sugar in 5-45 seconds depending on your meter.
- Write down your number.

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Whether you are a type 1 or type 2 diabetic, self-monitor-

The goal for blood sugar before meals is 90-130 mg/dL, while 1-2 hours after meals it should be less than 180 mg/dL. Blood sugar less than 70 mg/dl is considered low (hypoglycemia). Most patients with diabetes will have readings outside of goal occasionally. Talk with your provider if you are consistently having readings below 70 mg/dl or above 180 mg/dl.

ing your blood sugar is important for good control. How often and when you check your blood glucose depends on the plan your healthcare provider has designed for you. Typically those using insulin check more often. Checking frequently can help you learn how food, exercise, stress, medications and insulin affect your blood sugar. With the upcoming holidays and all of the goodies that go along with them, most of us have a tendency to overeat. This is why for most people with diabetes control worsens during the holidays. Monitoring can help prevent this. It is especially important to keep track of your blood glucose when you change your normal eating habits.

Your local pharmacist can help you manage your diabetes in many ways. They can explain how to take your medi-

cations, and help choose less expensive drug alternatives if you do not have insurance. Some over-the-counter medications and herbs should not be taken if you have diabetes, while others may be helpful. Your pharmacist can assist you in their selection. Because so many meters are available, picking one can be confusing. In addition, some insurance companies prefer a particular type of meter. Your pharmacist can work with you and your provider to determine which meter is right for you, demonstrate how to use it, and explain what the results mean. Pharmacists can also screen people for diabetes and make referrals by performing A1C tests, which measure your average blood sugar level over the last three months. This test should be done at least twice a year on people with diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease that affects many Americans. Treatment of diabetes starts with you, but should include the help of many other professionals. Your pharmacist has the knowledge and skills to help you achieve excellent control of your disease and prevent many of the complications associated with it. If you would like your blood glucose levels tested and to learn more about diabetes join us at the College of Pharmacy Open House to celebrate National Pharmacists Month, October 24 from 4 to 7 pm.

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