

Diabetes and Your Child: Checking Blood Sugar

You've been told that your child has diabetes. This means that you must check his or her blood sugar level as directed by the doctor. This is the only way to know if your child's management plan is working. Your child's healthcare team will teach you how to check your child's blood sugar. You will learn how often to check and what the numbers mean for your child. This gives you the information you'll need to keep your child's blood sugar in a healthy range.

Using a Blood Glucose Meter

Blood sugar level is measured with a **blood glucose meter**. A meter measures the amount of glucose in your child's blood. You'll use a device called a lancet to get a tiny drop of blood. Blood is most often taken from a fingertip. But you may be able to test on the arm or the heel of the hand. The drop is placed on a small strip that goes into the meter. The meter then supplies a number (**reading**) that tells you the level of your child's blood sugar. There are several types of meters available. Your child's doctor will help you select a meter that best suits your child's needs.

Aim for Target Range

As often as possible, your child's blood sugar should be in **target range**. Target range is where his or her blood sugar level is healthiest. Aim to keep your child's blood sugar in target range. This will help reduce the risk of health problems, including **diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA)**. Your child's doctor will help you figure out what his or her target range should be. Fill in your child's target range here:

- Before a meal: Between _____ and _____
- 2 Hours after a meal: Between _____ and _____

Why Check Blood Sugar?

The main goal of diabetes management is to keep your child as healthy as possible by controlling blood sugar levels. Your healthcare team will work with you to set blood sugar target ranges for your child. They'll also teach you how to check your child's blood sugar. This gives you information that helps you keep your child's blood sugar levels in a healthy range.

Tracking Your Child's Readings

Keep a record of all your child's blood sugar readings. You can use a "log book" to write down numbers. Or, many meters can store numbers that can be downloaded to a computer. Keeping a record helps you identify patterns, such as high numbers after certain foods or activities. Use your child's log book to spot patterns and make adjustments to his or her management plan. This will help you keep your child's blood sugar in his or her target range more often. Be sure to bring the log book to all appointments with your child's doctor.



Problem Solving

You can use your child's log to spot patterns and find solutions to problems. For example, looking over the log can help you see what tends to happen at a certain time of day, or when your child eats a certain

and figure out what they mean.

Checking Blood Sugar Is Part of Life

Checking blood sugar should be part of your child’s daily routine. Make sure your child carries a meter and supplies whenever he or she is away from home. To encourage your child to check regularly, make sure he or she knows the purpose of checking. It is part of the “detective” work that helps you and your child make decisions and solve problems.

Tips

To make finger sticks less painful:

- Use the side of the finger.
- Use a meter that requires less blood.
- Use an adjustable lancing device.
- Use a “fine” lancet.
- Don’t clean the finger with alcohol—soap and water is fine.

Make an Agreement with Your Child

You, the diabetes educator, and your child can work out an agreement for blood sugar monitoring. It should include:

- The times and situations when your child agrees to check his or her blood sugar.
- What kind of log your child will keep.
- A reward system for sticking to the agreement and being honest. Nonfood rewards are best. Never use skipping an insulin shot as a reward.

Encourage Your Child to Do More

As your child gets older, he or she can take on more tasks. To do this, your child will need to learn with you about managing diabetes. If your child wants to do his or her own blood sugar checks, that’s great! But keep in mind that things may not work perfectly at first. That’s okay. You can both keep trying.

Try Not to Judge

Sometimes, your child will have high or low numbers. You may not know right away why this happened. Don’t get upset if you see numbers that are out of range. And try not to judge your child’s behavior based on these numbers. Many things can affect blood sugar level, including emotions such as excitement. So don’t punish your child or get upset at high or low readings. Your child needs to trust that he or she can show you any number. If you are having trouble keeping your child’s blood sugar in target range, contact your child’s doctor. The doctor can help you adjust your child’s management plan as needed.