When should I do my blood tests?

You should test your blood sugar level:

* when you wake in the morning; and
* before meals.

Your tests will tell you how well diet, medication and exercise are working together to control your diabetes. They also provide useful information for your doctor.

How often should I do my blood tests?

Generally you should measure your glucose levels between one and four times a day. Your doctor or nurse will have the best advice on how often you need to test.

During illness or if you change your lifestyle, you will need to test more often.

**What type of diet should I eat?**

The ideal diet for people with diabetes is very much like the ideal diet for everybody else. A healthy diet is an essential part of treatment for people with diabetes and therefore needs to be followed for life.

Healthy diets are:

* low in refined sugar;
* low in saturated fat;
* high in fibre, vitamins and minerals.

If you are overweight it is essential that you lose weight by changing your diet and exercising. This helps to improve your diabetes control because the insulin you produce works better and there are less demands on your body. Anyone diagnosed with diabetes should be given an appointment with a dietician to help them with their diet.

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Are there any tips for healthy eating?

Eat regular meals

Eat regular meals every day, especially breakfast.

Check with your diabetes team if your insulin regime means you need to take a snack before going to bed at night.

Eat starchy foods

As the main part of each meal, eat a starchy food like one of the following:

* bread;
* cereal;
* potato;
* pasta; or
* rice.

Try to eat the same amount

of starchy foods at your meals each day. Choose high fibre foods like:

* Weetabix;
* porridge;
* Bran Flakes;
* wholemeal breads;
* wholegrain rice; or
* pastas.

Don’t take in too much sugar

Limit the intake of sugar and sugary foods. When you do take them as a treat, eat them with your meal. Use an artificial sweetener instead of sugar in hot drinks. It is best to avoid or take in moderation the following foods:

* sugar;
* chocolate and sweets;
* honey and glucose;
* regular jams and marmalades;
* cakes and sweet biscuits; and
* regular squash and sugary fizzy drinks.

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**Keep your fat intake low** Choose lean cuts of meat, remove visible fat and use low- fat methods of cooking like: oven baking, stewing, roasting, grilling, boiling, poaching, steaming or microwaving.

* Choose low-fat dairy

products.

* Use low-fat spread instead of butter or margarine.
* Limit the amount of spread used.
* Use low-fat milk instead of regular milk.

**Eat oily fish**

Eat oily fish at least twice a week. Include fish like:

* mackerel;
* salmon;
* sardines;
* trout;
* fresh or frozen tuna; and
* herrings.

**Eat vegetables and fruit** Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. Aim to have at least five

portions each day – spread out over the day.

**Reduce your salt**

You should not add salt to your food at the table and you should reduce your intake of salty foods like:

* processed meats;
* packet sauces;
* gravies;
* smoked fish;
* crisps; and
* nuts.

**‘Diabetic’ foods are not useful**

You are not advised or recommended to buy special diabetic foods like sweets, chocolate and biscuits. This is because these foods are high in fat and therefore high in calories.

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