

Type 2 Diabetes Test Strips: Questions and Answers for Patients

Note: This does not apply to people with type 1 diabetes or type 2 diabetes on insulin

1. Why are changes being introduced to blood glucose test strips for Type 2 diabetes?

The National Clinical Programme for Diabetes has provided updated guidance on self testing for people with type 2 diabetes. Research has indicated that blood glucose testing has a limited benefit for many patients who **do not** take insulin to manage their diabetes. Based on best evidence, the HSE is introducing changes to the number of blood glucose test strips it will provide for people with type 2 diabetes while ensuring those who need test strips to help manage their diabetes will continue to have access to them. The new changes are based on recommendations from a review by the Medicines Management Programme (MMP). This review looked at international evidence and best practice guidelines along with national usage (available on www.HSE.ie/yourmedicines).

This initiative will reduce wastage of test strips by providing them based on best practice guidelines while ensuring that those who need test strips to help manage their diabetes will continue to have access to them.

2. When will the changes come into effect?

These changes will be effective from 1st April 2016.

3. What are the new allowances for test strips in type 2 diabetes?

<i>Patient group</i>	<i>Testing recommendation</i>	<i>yearly dispensing amounts</i>
Patients receiving insulin	4 times daily and when required	No limit recommended Test according to specialist recommendations
Patients receiving non-insulin anti-diabetic drugs	Patients receiving sulphonylurea (e.g. gliclazide) or meglitinide (e.g. repaglinide) drugs : May test 1-2 times daily or if feeling hypoglycaemic.	1200 test strips per year Two boxes (100 test strips) per month will be reimbursed
	Patients on anti-diabetic drugs other than sulphonylurea or meglitinides (i.e. metformin and/or a thiazolidinedione, DPP-4 inhibitor , GLP-1 analogue, SGLT2 inhibitor)*: May test 3 times per week if needed	600 test strips per year One box (50 test strips) per month will be reimbursed
Diet alone	Not required	100 test strips per year One pack per 6 months to allow for periodic testing where recommended

* Thiazolidinedione (e.g. pioglitazone), DPP-4 inhibitor (e.g. sitagliptin, saxagliptin), GLP-1 analogue (e.g. liraglutide, exenatide), SGLT2 inhibitor (e.g. canagliflozin, dapagliflozin)



4. How do I know how many test strips I qualify for?

The test strip allowance is based on the medicines that you are taking (see question 3). Through your pharmacy, the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) will track the number of blood glucose test strips that you are eligible to receive in a 365-day period based on your diabetes treatments.

If you use more test strips than the expected amount in one year, it is suggested that you speak to your doctor to ensure you are testing properly.

5. What will I do if I need more test strips?

While the new amounts allow for more regular testing than is generally recommended, it is understood that there still may be *exceptional clinical circumstances* where you may require even more frequent testing.

If it is determined that you need more test strips, your doctor (GP or in your diabetes clinic) can apply on-line for an exemption on your behalf to the PCRS. He/she must indicate the reason(s) for the additional monitoring along with the additional test strip requirement. Where such a request is received it will be approved.

6. I have type 2 diabetes controlled by diet and lifestyle changes and I don't currently test my blood glucose levels. Should I start now?

No, not every patient with type 2 diabetes is required to test their blood glucose levels and many patients won't benefit from it.

Healthy eating and modifying your lifestyle is a very useful way to control your blood sugars and diabetes. If you would like to track your blood glucose levels going forward schedule regular HbA1c tests with your doctor (every 4 to 6 months). This can help in the management of your diabetes.

Also, you may find that you don't need your full allowance of test strips. We ask that you only fill a prescription for test strips as you need them as this will reduce waste and unnecessary supply.

7. What other steps should I be taking to manage my diabetes?

Many people think that self-testing their blood sugar is the main way to manage their diabetes, but there is much more to managing diabetes. Healthcare providers use a lab test called an HbA1C test to keep track of your blood sugar. The HbA1C test is a blood test that is done up to four times per year. The results of this test give your doctor an overall picture of how well controlled your blood sugar is. Keeping track of your HbA1C results is a very useful tool you can use to manage your diabetes.

There is also a lot that you can do to stay healthy and prevent complications:

- ✓ Eat healthy meals and avoid junk food.
- ✓ Be active: Walking regularly is a good start.
- ✓ Take all your medications according to your doctor and pharmacists instructions.
- ✓ Make sure your blood pressure and cholesterol levels are in a healthy range.
- ✓ Go for regular eye check-ups.
- ✓ Regularly check your feet for any sores.
- ✓ Manage your stress well.
- ✓ See your health care providers regularly and talk about your HbA1C results.

Please remember that these amounts **DO NOT APPLY** to patients with **type 1 diabetes** or to **type 2 diabetes who are treated with insulin**.

8. Where can I get information in relation to best practice for self-monitoring of blood glucose?

The National Clinical Programme for Diabetes has produced an information booklet on appropriate testing with type 2 diabetes. This can be found on www.hse.ie/diabetes and is available to order by your doctor or yourself on www.healthpromotion.ie. Further information can be found on www.hse.ie/yourmedicines.