

## Diabetes Control

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Yes! We all know young people with diabetes don't like to write down their blood glucose levels (BGLs). We have heard all the excuses, like:

- 'being too busy and not having the time'
- 'can remember the results, so don't need to write them down'
- 'can't find the BG book'
- 'can't find a pen'

Whatever the reason for not recording your BGLs, it results in you not thinking about what your levels mean. There's no point in taking your BGL if you are not going to think about what the results mean.

Writing your BGLs down, gives you a chance to see if there are any patterns in the levels, like consistently high in the mornings or consistently low at dinner time.

Staying on top of what's going on with you and your diabetes will mean fewer problems and more time to enjoy life.

### Why do I need good diabetes control?

Too much glucose in the blood stream for a long time causes diabetes related complications. High BGLs damage many parts of the body, such as the heart, blood vessels, eyes and kidneys. Heart and blood vessel disease can lead to heart attacks and strokes. By keeping your BGLs as close to normal as possible (between 4.0 and 8 mmol/L most of the time), your long term health will be better. More importantly, you will feel better, have a lot more energy and reduce the risk of developing diabetes related complications.

### BGL monitoring and recording

It is important to understand that your BGL will vary with day-to-day activities. For example, your BGL will usually go down after exercise, and will go up after you have eaten or if you are unwell or stressed.

Knowing how your BGLs change in response to these things helps you to plan your day and adjust your insulin to help keep your BGL within the normal range. Monitoring your BGL also tells you how well your insulin doses and dosage adjustments are working.

Yes, it's boring writing down your BGLs in a log book but it helps you see patterns in your blood glucose levels, like if every morning your BGL is above 13 mmol/L, then you need more overnight (basal)insulin. If you are not writing the levels down you might not notice patterns and therefore not make any insulin dosage changes to fix the levels. If you can't remember, or don't have time to write them down every day, what about writing them down three days a week. This is not perfect, but at least it will give you some information to make adjustments to your insulin doses.

amount of glucose that has been in your bloodstream during the past two to three months. This test is usually done every three months, and gives valuable information about your diabetes control. Most hospital and community health clinics have a machine that can test HbA1c from a finger prick blood sample and give you the result in just a few minutes.

The result is usually given as a percentage, though increasingly it is being reported as mmol/mol instead (Table 1). An HbA1c of 9% does not mean that the average BGL has been 9 mmol/L for the past three months.

**Table 1: What your HbA1c results mean**

HbA1c result (%)	HbA1c result (mmol/mol)	Average blood glucose level from finger prick (mmol/L)
4	20	2.6
5	31	4.7
6	42	6.3
7	53	8.2
8	64	10.0
9	75	11.9
10	86	13.7
11	97	15.6
12	108	17.4
13	119	19.3
14	130	21.1

## What should my HbA1c result be?

You need to aim for a result of 7% or lower. Discuss with your doctor what level you should be aiming for. The lower your HbA1C is, the smaller your chance of having health problems in the future.

If your result is more than 8%, you may need changes in the day-to-day management of your diabetes. You may need to change your eating plan, your insulin doses or your activity levels.

## More information

For more information on diabetes control, visit the following websites:

<http://www.australiandiabetescouncil.com/>

<http://www.diabetes.co.uk/what-is-hba1c.html>