

Your Guide to HbA1c

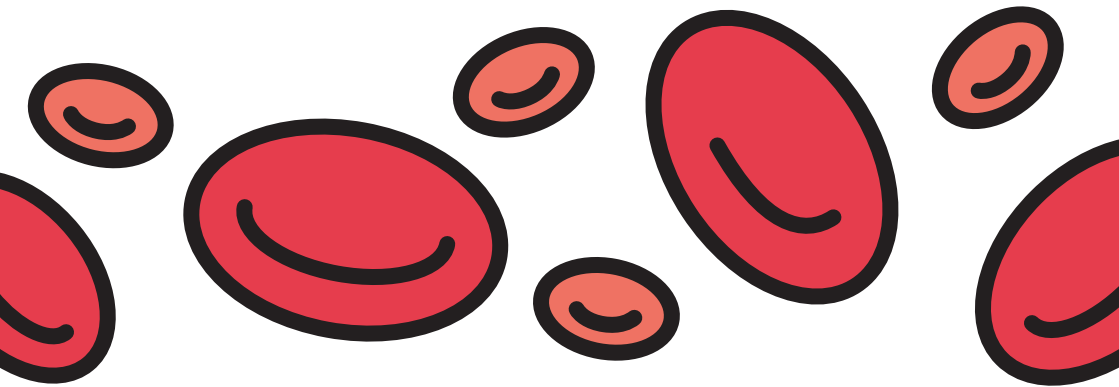
and how to **take back control** of your blood sugar.

So, what is HbA1c?

HbA1c refers to glycated haemoglobin, sounds fancy huh.

Glucose is a type of sugar we consume from foods such as ultra-processed items like cakes, crisps and cereal. Haemoglobin is part of your red blood cells that carries oxygen from your lungs to the rest of your body.

Glucose in the blood can stick to haemoglobin and irreversibly change it to glycated haemoglobin, or HbA1c. The higher your blood sugar levels, the more HbA1c is present.





Why should I test?

An HbA1c test is used in understanding and managing diabetes, or to assess how well you are responding to diabetes medication.

It is an essential tool as it provides a long-term view of our blood glucose control, whereas the common glucose test only provides a snapshot of that moment in time.

Good HbA1c control will lower your risk of diabetes related complications.

What is a normal HbA1c level?

HbA1c test results are given either a percentage or more usually in mmol/mol. These measurements compare glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) to un-glycated haemoglobin (Hb).

A normal level of HbA1c is **<41 mmol/mol (<5.9%)**.

If you have diabetes, your healthcare provider will set a target level that is unique to you – as although the ideal target is less than **48 mmol/mol (6.5%)**, this may not be realistic for those with extreme levels.

HbA1c	mmol/mol	%
Normal	<41	<5.9
Pre-diabetes	42-47	6-6.4
Diabetes	>48	>6.5

Help! I have a high glucose level... now what?

Taken a test and your results have come back high? Before running to your nearest supermarket and buying all the salad you can find – it is important to note that a raised HbA1c level does **not guarantee diabetes**, especially if you do not have any of the common symptoms that occur with type 2.

Certain health conditions, such as anaemia or chronic kidney disease can adversely affect HbA1c levels. Likewise, different medications such as birth control and blood pressure tablets can skew the figures.

If you have a high test result, but do not have the symptoms of type 2 diabetes, we recommend speaking with your healthcare provider.

If you have the common symptoms of type 2, listed below¹, we also recommend speaking with your healthcare provider regarding management and care:

- **Weeing a lot, especially at night**
- **Being really thirsty**
- **Feeling more tired than usual**
- **Losing weight without trying to**
- **Genital itching or thrush**
- **Cuts and wounds taking longer to heal**
- **Blurred eyesight**

How to manage your HbA1c levels

Whether you have a pre-diabetic or diabetic result and you are looking to improve your number, or a normal result and hoping to maintain – there are a number of steps you can take to improve your blood sugar control and improve your general health and wellbeing.

Diet

Consuming a diet high in refined sugars and carbohydrates can raise our HbA1c levels. Try and incorporate more wholegrains, leafy greens, lean protein and healthy fats such as oily fish, nuts and seeds to keep blood sugar levels stable.

Exercise

Regular physical activity helps lower blood sugar levels and improve our HbA1c results. Aim for at least 30 minutes of low-moderate intensity exercise each day.

Stress

Keep stress to a minimum where you can and reduce the impact of stress by engaging in relaxation activities – think yoga, massage, or relaxing with a good book!

Re-test often

If your levels are stable, it is recommended you test once a year to keep track. For those who are not meeting their blood sugar goals, aim for quarterly testing.



Want to know more?

There are lots of great resources on HbA1c, diabetes and how you can manage or prevent the condition.

Check out **Diabetes UK** or the **NHS** website for more

Ready to start the journey to a better you?

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