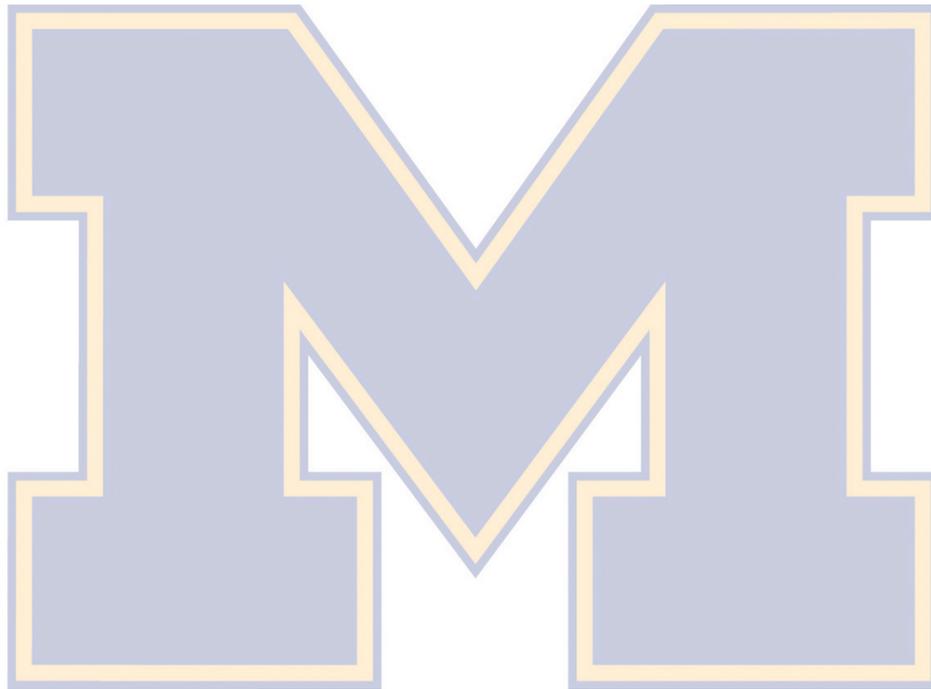


Newsletter #6



Checking Your Blood Sugar To Keep Your Diabetes On Course

In the early days of flying, pilots seldom flew at night because they could not see how high or low they were flying. Today, most planes have modern instruments that allow them to be flown safely after dark. If you have diabetes, you are trying to keep your diabetes on course. Like a pilot, you need good information. Luckily, there are blood sugar monitors to help you. When you check the level of sugar (glucose) in your blood you can help keep your blood sugar from flying too high or too low.

Today most people with diabetes try to keep their blood sugars as close to normal (80 to 100 mg/dL) as is safe for them. This can help prevent the short-term problems of diabetes such as dangerously high levels of blood sugar and the long-term complications of diabetes such as eye and kidney damage. Most people choose a target range for their blood sugar. For example, they may aim for a before meal blood sugar target of 80-130 mg/dL and an after meal target of less than 180 mg/dL.

To keep your blood sugar on course you need to make many decisions. Some of them are made by you and your health care team together. Most are made by you alone. The information you get when you check your blood sugar allows you and your health care team to make wise choices.

For example, a record of blood sugar levels helps you and your health care provider to see how medicines, physical activity, food, colds and flu, stress and other things affect your blood sugar each day. With the help of your doctor and diabetes educators you can learn to adjust your insulin or other medications, level of physical activity, and meal plan whenever needed.

There are a variety of meters on the market today. Although each works a bit differently, you need a drop of blood from your fingertip or elsewhere to do a check. Once the blood is on the strip, the meter "reads" the level of sugar in your bloodstream. Although most meters have a memory that stores your latest blood sugar readings, it will be easier for you to look at your numbers if you keep a record. Your record helps you find patterns in your blood sugar levels. It also helps you to more easily see times when your blood sugar is often above or below your target level, so that you can do something about it.

Keep in mind that you are monitoring your blood sugar for yourself, not just your health care team. Your blood sugar checks give you the information you need to help keep your blood sugar where you want it to be. Members of your health care team are like experts in the control tower who provide you with needed help. But, in terms of daily diabetes care, you are the pilot. Monitoring your blood sugar and using the information to make decisions can keep you flying safely.

Ask your doctor, nurse, or dietitian the following questions:

1. What blood sugar targets are safe for me?
2. What do my numbers mean?
3. How can I use the results of my blood tests to improve my blood sugar levels?

4. How can I make changes in my medications, meal plan or activity to keep my blood sugar in the target range?
5. When should I call you about my readings?