

# Health Bulletin



## Know Your A1C, Avoid Diabetes Complications

(NAPSA)—You thought you knew the facts. If you kept your blood glucose (sugar) levels on track, you could prevent diabetes-related complications such as heart and kidney disease, eye disease and problems with your lower limbs.

However, if you rely solely on daily finger-stick checks to determine your blood glucose control, this is not enough. While daily testing is helpful, it only provides a snapshot of your health at a given moment. For example, your blood glucose levels may be normal before meals, but soar to dangerous heights after you eat.

That's why the American Diabetes Association (ADA) strongly urges people with diabetes to take a more sophisticated test of blood glucose control known as the A1C. This check measures average blood glucose levels over a two-to-three-month period and is the only accurate measure of overall diabetes control.

People with diabetes should keep their A1C level below 7 percent and have it tested at least twice a year. The A1C test can help confirm daily self-checks and demonstrate whether a treatment plan is working.

Small changes in A1C levels can make a big difference. For example, lowering your A1C just one percentage point translates into a 30 to 35 percent reduction in eye, kidney and nerve complications and cuts the risk of heart attack by 16 percent. In contrast, each point over 7 percent doubles a person's risk of developing diabetes-related complications.



**A comprehensive blood test can help people with diabetes avoid additional health risks.**

It's important to work closely with your diabetes care team to determine the best approach for lowering your A1C, but here are some tips:

- ✓ Know your A1C target.
- ✓ Follow your diabetes meal plan and exercise program.
- ✓ Take all of your medications as prescribed.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight.
- ✓ See your doctor at least twice a year.

Checking your A1C levels at least two times a year, in addition to daily monitoring of blood glucose, will help you see how well you are managing your diabetes and lowering your risk for long-term problems.

This message is from the ADA and the American College of Cardiology (ACC). The ADA and ACC are working together on an educational initiative called Make the Link! Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke. For more information, call 1-800-DIABETES or visit [www.diabetes.org/makethelink](http://www.diabetes.org/makethelink).