

Glucometers

Kelly Baxter, PharmD

Glucometers¹⁻⁴

New diabetes testing supplies are being sent to Veterans across VA Nebraska-Western Iowa. The Accu-Chek® Guide Me blood glucose system provides quick and easy testing and is very similar to the previous meter. The Guide Me meter uses different test strips that come in a spill-resistant vial and has a larger memory for storing results. Though the meter is different, how to test blood sugars remains the same

Here are some helpful tips for monitoring blood sugar:

Always keep the monitor handy – it is important to test blood sugar before taking insulin or if there are symptoms of low blood sugar.

- Symptoms of low blood sugar include:

- o Shakiness or dizziness
- o Headache
- o Fast, pounding heart rate
- o Sweating or cold, clammy skin
- o Nervousness or anxiety
- o Irritability
- o Confusion
- o Hunger

- When testing blood sugar, if the reading is under 70 mg/dL, follow the "Rule of 15"

If 3 cycles of treatment do not raise blood sugar, call 911 immediately.

If it will be several hours until the next planned meal once treated low blood sugars are successfully treated, eat a 15-gram carbohydrate snack with fat and protein.

How to Treat Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

1.  Eat/Drink 15 g Carbs
2.  Wait 15 Minutes
3.  Check Blood
4.  Less than 70 mg/dl? Repeat Steps 1-4



Examples of food and drinks that contain 15 grams of carbohydrate include:

- o 3-4 glucose tablets
- o 1 glucose gel tube
- o 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of juice or regular soda (not diet)
- o 1 tablespoon of sugar, honey, or corn syrup
- o Hard candies, jellybeans, or gumdrops

It is very important to tell the health care team about low blood sugars so medication adjustments can be made.

Wash and dry hands before testing blood sugar because food residue on hands can affect blood sugar readings. Washing hands with soap and water help get a more accurate reading. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used to clean hands. Avoid using alcohol prep pads, as these can dry out skin and affect readings.

Glucometers & CDC Guidance

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Do not share blood sugar monitoring equipment. Sharing equipment, even with family members, increases risk of spreading infection.

Keep records of blood sugars. The Accu-Chek meter stores blood sugar readings and can be brought to appointments for review by a healthcare provider. It can also be helpful to write down blood sugar readings and keep a food diary to guide the provider to help meet blood sugar goals. Other factors such as activity and stress can affect blood sugar, so keeping track of those items can also help make treatment decisions.

As a reminder, Veterans not on insulin may receive test strips in these situations:

- At diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes (50 test strips once)
- Also taking a medication that may increase risk of low blood sugars or if having low blood sugars (100 strips per year)
- For short-term monitoring in special situations (50 strips once)

Veterans on metformin or diet control alone will not receive additional test strips after diagnosis. According to the American Diabetes Association, regular glucose monitoring for patients on only metformin has limited clinical benefit. A hemoglobin A1c is the best monitoring to track progress toward blood sugar goals.

Resources:

1. CDC. *Monitoring Your Blood Sugar*. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/managing-blood-sugar/bloodglucosemonitoring.html>. March 2019.
2. CDC. *Infection Prevention during Blood Glucose Monitoring and Insulin Administration*. <https://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/blood-glucose-monitoring.html>. March 2011.
3. VA Pharmacy Benefits Management Services, Medical Advisory Panel, and VISN Pharmacist Executives. *Dispensing Guidance for Home Glucose Monitoring Test Strips for Patients with Type 2 Diabetes NOT Receiving Insulin*. December 2017.
4. American Diabetes Association. *Hypoglycemia (Low Blood sugar)*. <https://www.diabetes.org/diabetes/medication-management/blood-glucose-testing-and-control/hypoglycemia>.
5. American Diabetes Association. *Diabetes Technology: Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes 2020*. *Diabetes Care* 2020; 43(Supplement 1): S77-S88. *Staying Healthy*



Staying Healthy⁵

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following tips to stay healthy:

Wash hands often

- Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, or after nose-blowing, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of hands and rub together until dry.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick

- Stay home as much as possible
- Keep distance of 6 feet from other people

Cover mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- Wear a cloth face cover when out in public
- Do not use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker
- Wash the face cover regularly in a washing machine



Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily

- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection
- Options for disinfecting include diluted household bleach, 70% alcohol solutions, or other household disinfectants

- o Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation

- o Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner

- o Check to ensure product is not past its expiration date

- To make a bleach solution, mix:

- o 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water

OR

- o 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- Ensure proper air flow while cleaning and disinfecting
- Store all cleaning and disinfecting solutions out of reach of children and pets. If there is reason to believe anyone has ingested or been overly exposed to chemicals, contact Poison Control immediately



References:

6. CDC. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): How to Protect Yourself and Others. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Medication Refills

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Medication Refills

Taking medications as prescribed is an important step to staying healthy. To keep Veterans safe, all medication refills will be mailed.

Why request refills by mail?

- No waiting at the Pharmacy for medications
- Less delay in care for Veterans who need to start medications right away
- Allows pharmacists to process prescriptions for timely arrival and to avoid lapse in therapy
- Saves time and money – cost of transportation and time to get the VA

To request a refill:

- Telephone: Call 1-855-560-1722 and follow directions when prompted
- Online: Go to My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov

Important reminders about your prescriptions:

- Medication refills are NOT sent automatically. A good rule-of-thumb is to request the next medication refill as soon as the medication is received. Doing so will put the next refill in the queue to be sent out on time and prevent being without medication.
- Once a medication refill has been requested, the medication will be sent to the address on file. Refills CANNOT be picked up at the Pharmacy window.
- Request refills at least 10-14 days before running out of medicine.
- If you have questions about the status of the refill you requested please call 1-855-560-1722 for an update or check www.myhealth.va.gov