

Factors Affecting Blood Sugar

If you don't have diabetes, no matter what you eat or how active you are, your blood sugar (blood glucose) levels will stay in a normal range on their own. If you have diabetes, your blood sugar levels can rise or fall based on many factors. The amount your levels change can be different from day to day. This can be very frustrating and confusing.

Many factors can make your blood sugar levels go higher and lower. Learning about them can help you reach your target levels and feel more confident about your health.

Knowing what your blood sugar levels are and what affects them can help you make decisions about what to eat and how to be active during the day to reach your target blood sugar levels. This will help you delay or prevent diabetes complications.

“Many factors can make your blood sugar levels go higher and lower.”

What can make your blood sugar go up?

- Too much food, like a meal or snack high in carbohydrates (starches), or eating more carbohydrates than usual
- Not enough physical activity
- Not taking enough insulin or other diabetes medications
- Side effects from other medications, such as steroids
- Getting sick—your body releases hormones to get better and those hormones can raise blood sugar levels
- Stress or pain, which can produce hormones that also raise blood sugar levels
- Menstrual periods, which also cause changes in hormone levels
- Dehydration

What can make your blood sugar go down?

- Not eating enough food. This could be eating a meal or snack with fewer carbohydrates than usual or missing a meal or snack
- Alcohol, especially on an empty stomach. Alcohol use can cause dangerously low blood sugar. Low blood sugar can also happen many hours after alcohol use
- Too much insulin or other diabetes medications
- Side effects from other medications
- More physical activity or exercise than usual—physical activity makes your body more sensitive to insulin and can lower blood sugar

How can you track your blood sugar?

There are two ways to keep track of your blood sugar levels:

- Using a blood sugar meter or continuous glucose monitor (CGM) to measure your blood sugar level at that moment
- Getting an A1C blood test at least twice a year to find out your average blood sugar for the past two to three months