



# By The Book

## Keep careful records of your blood glucose checks.

BY KATE RUDER


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MEASURING YOUR BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS IS ESSENTIAL to keeping your diabetes under control. Yet the next step—keeping careful records of these measurements—is just as critical.

Your records are the key to helping you and your doctor evaluate if your treatment plan is working. Looking over your records will help you see:

- If your blood glucose levels are too high, putting you at risk for complications.
- How food, pills, stress, exercise, and insulin affect your glucose levels.
- If you take insulin, whether your doses are correct or need to be fine-tuned.

The number one reason to keep records is so that doctors can work with their patients to make necessary adjustments in medications or lifestyle, says Farhad Zangeneh, MD, FACE, an endocrinologist at the Endocrine, Diabetes, and Osteoporosis Clinic in Sterling, Va., and an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine.



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—Maria Matas-Chamberlain, RN, CDE

## What's In Your Log?

You should keep your records in a paper logbook or computer spreadsheet. Your doctor can provide you with a logbook or your glucose meter may come with a separate logbook. Computer spreadsheets can be kept on a home computer or handheld personal digital assistant (PDA).

At a minimum, your log should have spaces to record the date, time, and your glucose measurements. If you take insulin, you'll want a section to record insulin doses. There should also be a place to write down comments, such as whether you exercised or had a stressful meeting with your boss, because these events also affect blood glucose.

“What my patients often forget to write down is what happened to them on a particular day—whether they went out to eat, received bad news, or had a cold,” says Maria Matas-Chamberlain, RN, CDE, a diabetes educator at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, Md.

Ask your doctor or diabetes educator which readings he or she wants you to take, as well as how often to take them. For example, if you've been newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, you might be asked to take readings three times a day.

## A Tool For You And Your Doctor

Make sure to bring your log with you when you visit your doctor or diabetes educator. Together, you can go over the records to see whether you are doing the things that will help you maintain good control.

You may need to make adjustments in your insulin doses, medication, or lifestyle. And remember, this news isn't always bad. Sometimes you may need to make adjustments because you've lost weight or you're exercising more.

People may wonder whether they need a logbook if their read-

ings are stored in the memory of their glucose meter. The answer is yes. It's much easier to scan a log for trends, and see in the comments which events may have affected your glucose levels.

Trying to catch up on records at the end of the day or even after a few days won't work, says Patricia Strainic, RN, MS, CDE, an advanced practice diabetes educator at Inova Diabetes Center in Fairfax, Va.

According to Strainic, you should write down your measurements as soon as you take them. Also circle or highlight days or readings that you want to remember to talk over with your doctor or diabetes educator.

It doesn't matter if you use simple paper and pencil for your log or sophisticated computer spreadsheets. The most important thing is to find a log that works for you—and that you'll use. ▲

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*Kate Ruder is an associate editor of Diabetes Forecast.*