Blood Glucose and Hemoglobin (HbA1C)

What is hemoglobin (HbA1C)?
• An A1C test measures average blood glucose control over a 2-3 month period.

When should HbA1C be measured?
• HbA1C should be measured at least twice a year in diabetic patients who are meeting treatment goals and have stable glycemic control, or quarterly in diabetic patients who have had treatment changes or who are not meeting goals.
• It may also be measured in non-diabetic patients to assess the control of blood sugar in the previous 3 months.

What level should my HbA1C be?
• HbA1C levels less than 6% are considered normal.
• In patients with diabetes, lowering HbA1C to less than 7% has been shown to reduce vascular and neurological complications of diabetes.
• In a recent clinical trial, examining intensive therapy to lower HbA1C below 6% in diabetic patients, there was a higher rate of mortality compared to less intensive therapy; it is important to discuss your individual goals with your doctor.

Ways you can improve control of glucose levels and reduce HbA1C:
• Participate in a structured program to lose weight if you are overweight.
• Discuss exercise and develop regular physical activity goals with your physician.
• Increase your intake of dietary fiber and foods that contain whole grains.
• If you have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes, monitor your carbohydrate and saturated fat intake. Consider meeting with a registered dietitian to create a diabetic diet plan.
• For certain people, medications are recommended to help improve blood glucose levels. If your physician recommends you take medication to improve your blood glucose levels, do so as directed.

This handout provides brief, general information about your heart disease risk. It does not take the place of advice from your healthcare provider. Call your healthcare provider with any questions or for additional information.

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