

AUSTRALIAN

Clinicallabs

HbA1c Testing for Diabetes Management

Helpful information for patients



What is diabetes?

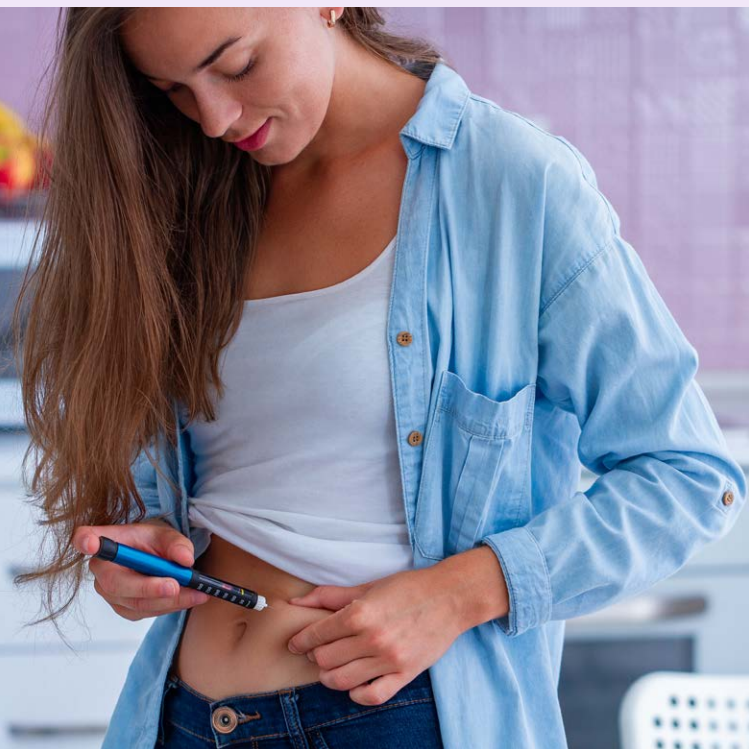
Diabetes is a chronic health condition characterised by high blood sugar levels due to the body's inability to produce enough insulin or use it effectively. It can lead to various health complications and requires lifelong management through medication, diet, and lifestyle changes.

How do Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes differ?

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, resulting in a lack of insulin production. *Currently, approximately 134,000 Australians are living with Type 1 diabetes, accounting for 10% of all diabetes cases.¹*

Type 2 diabetes is a metabolic disorder characterised by insulin resistance or insufficient insulin production and is often associated with lifestyle factors such as obesity. *Nearly 1.3 million Australians are living with Type 2 diabetes, representing approximately 85-90% of diabetes cases.¹*

1. <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/about-diabetes/diabetes-in-australia/> Accessed 19.06.23



Common symptoms of diabetes

- Frequent urination, often waking at night
- Persistent and increased thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Increased appetite
- Fatigue, even after adequate rest
- Blurred vision, difficulty focusing
- Slow healing, such as cuts and sores
- Frequent infections, such as urinary tract infections or yeast infections (in females)
- Tingling or numbness in hands and feet
- Dry or itchy skin
- Headaches
- Feeling dizzy

How is diabetes diagnosed?

In Australia, diabetes is diagnosed through a combination of laboratory blood tests. The most common test is the fasting blood glucose blood test. Additionally, an oral glucose tolerance test or a glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) blood test may be used to confirm the diagnosis.

What is the difference between fasting blood glucose and HbA1c testing?

A blood glucose test measures the level of glucose (sugar) in a person's blood at a specific point in time, providing an immediate snapshot of blood sugar levels, while an HbA1c test measures the average blood sugar levels over a period of two to three months, offering a long-term perspective on blood sugar control.

HbA1c testing provides a more comprehensive view of how well a person's diabetes management plan is working and whether changes need to be made.

Why is HbA1c testing important for diabetes monitoring?

HbA1c testing plays a crucial role in the management of diabetes. By monitoring HbA1c levels, your health-care provider can determine if blood sugar control is being achieved and if adjustments in medication, diet, or exercise are required. Lowering HbA1c levels through lifestyle changes, medication, and insulin therapy can help reduce the risk of complications associated with diabetes, such as heart disease, stroke, kidney problems, nerve damage, and eye and foot problems. Regular HbA1c testing is an essential tool in assessing long-term blood sugar control and guiding treatment for people living with diabetes.



How often do I need to have an HbA1c test?

The frequency of HbA1c testing depends on several factors, such as the type of diabetes you have, your treatment plan, and your blood glucose control.

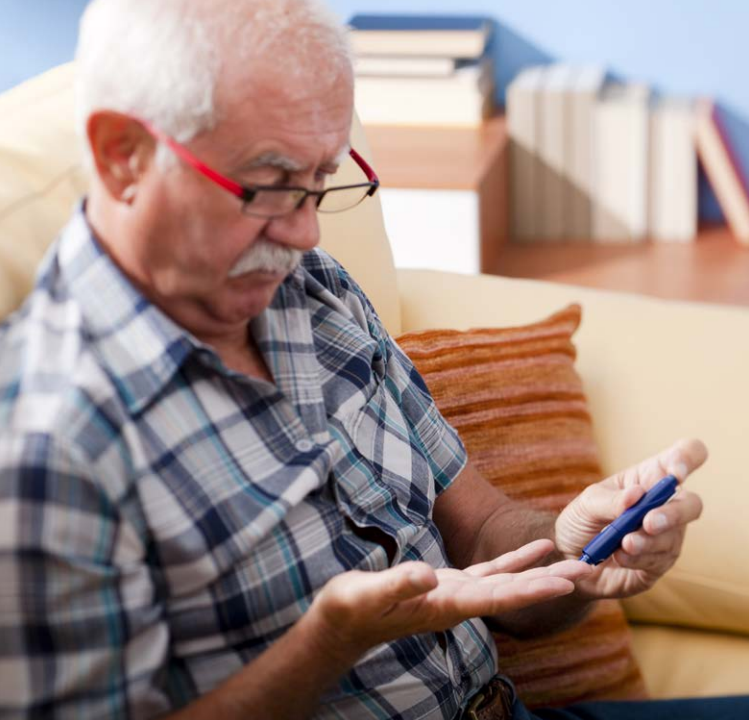
Typically, your doctor will provide you with a referral for testing every 3-6 months.

Patients living with diabetes are eligible for up to four Medicare-funded HbA1c tests per year.

Your doctor may also request additional pathology tests to obtain a comprehensive view of your overall health.

Education and empowerment

HbA1c testing empowers individuals living with diabetes to actively participate in their own care. By understanding their HbA1c levels and the target ranges, they can gain insights into their progress and make informed decisions about their lifestyle choices, medication adherence, and self-management strategies.



Interpreting HbA1c Results

- **Normal range (non-diabetic):** HbA1c levels are $\leq 5.9\%$
- **Prediabetes range:** HbA1c levels between 6.0% and 6.4% indicate a higher risk of developing diabetes
- **Diabetes:** HbA1c level $\geq 6.5\%$ (confirmed by either a repeat test or blood glucose level in the diabetes range)

Monitoring target range: Work with your doctor to determine the optimal target range for you.

Lifestyle factors that can positively impact HbA1c levels

- Healthy eating
- Regular physical activity
- Weight management
- Medication adherence
- Regular self-monitoring of blood glucose levels
- Stress management
- Limit your alcohol intake if you choose to drink
- Smoking cessation
- Improving sleep

Do I need to fast for an HbA1c test?

You do not need to fast for an HbA1c test, and testing can be performed at any time of the day. This is because the HbA1c test reflects your average blood glucose levels over the last two to three months and is not influenced by short-term changes in diet or fasting.

Where can I have my HbA1c test?

Once you have a referral from your doctor, you can visit any Clinical Labs collection centre at your convenience for your routine HbA1c tests.



To find the Clinical labs collection centre nearest you, visit clinicallabs.com.au/location or scan the QR code.



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