

# Things to Know About the A1C Test

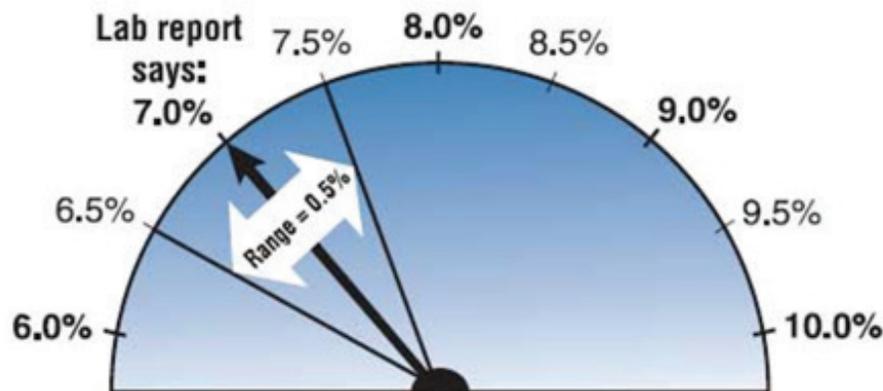
## What is the A1C test?

The A1C test is a blood test that represents your average blood glucose, also called blood sugar, over the past 3 months. The A1C test is sometimes called: hemoglobin A1C, HbA1C, or glycohemoglobin test. The A1C lets you and your providers know how well your blood sugars are doing. You do not need to fast prior to this test.

## How does the A1C test work?

Hemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen. The A1C test is based on how much sugar sticks to the hemoglobin. Your body makes new red blood cells about every 3 months, so the A1C test reflects your blood sugar control over the past 3 months. The higher the number, the higher your blood sugar levels have been.

## How true is the A1C test?



*Courtesy of David Aron, M.D., Louis Stokes Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Cleveland, OH*

Some laboratory tests are best thought of as a range, rather than an exact measure, because the test has a small margin of error built in. The A1C is a test that represents average blood sugar over the past three months. The results can be slightly off one way or the other. For example, even though the test says your result is 7.0%, your actual A1C could be anything between 6.5% and 7.5%. Most of the time, this amount of error is not that important. However, if you are at risk for low blood sugars, it is important to consider that your sugar levels may be lower than what the A1C shows.

## What should my A1C goal be?

We recommend an individualized approach where we discuss with you the benefits and harms of various A1C goals and select one that fits your lifestyle and the things that are important to you! Talk to your healthcare team about what A1C goal fits you!