# What is A1c and How to Manage It

## What is A1c?

Hemoglobin A1c, a protein found in red blood cells, measures average blood sugar levels over three months. It is used to diagnose and monitor type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is a disease where your body cannot use a substance in the body called insulin. Insulin helps lower blood sugar, so your blood sugar will rise without it. Foods and drinks that have sugar or carbohydrates, or carbs, raise your blood sugar. Our bodies need carbs to work well, but too many can make your blood sugar too high. High blood sugar can cause a lot of problems over time. Start making small changes now for future you!

## What does my A1c value mean?

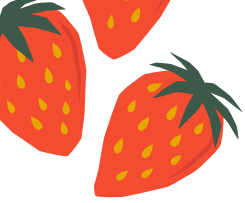Here are some examples of A1c values and their average blood sugar levels:

A1c of 6=135 mg/dL

8=205 mg/dL

10=275 mg/dL

A1c values below 5.7% are normal. Your doctor may be worried about prediabetes when your A1c is between 5.7% and 6.4%. An A1c of 6.5% and above means you have type 2 diabetes. If your A1c was high at your last doctor's visit, you may need to get your blood tested every 3 months to monitor your blood sugar and A1c.

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## How can I manage my A1c?

It is important to manage your blood sugar levels, and A1c is one way to see how well you manage it. Here are a few things you can start doing today:

- Reduce sugar sweetened drinks (like regular sodas)
- Switch to sugar-free versions of your favorite foods
- Eat foods with more fiber (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds)
- Eat meals lower in fats and carbohydrates
- Limit processed foods, white rice/bread/pasta, and starchy vegetables (like potatoes, corn, and peas)
- Try to eat 30-60 grams of carbohydrates at meals and 15-30 at snacks

## What should I look for when I shop?

Every packaged food has a label with information about Calories, protein, carbs, and other nutrients in that item. Fresh fruits and vegetables do not have these labels. Try to buy foods with more protein and less carbs.

Here is an example of how to read the label.

In 1/4 cup of this food, there are:

- 120 Calories
- 32 grams of carbs
- 2 grams of fiber
- 1 gram of protein

**Nutrition Facts**

1 serving per container
Serving size      1/4 cup (40g)

Amount per serving
**Calories**      **120**

| | % Daily Value* |
|---|---|
| Total Fat 0g | 0 % |
| Saturated Fat 0g | 0 % |
| *Trans* Fat 0g | |
| Cholesterol 0mg | 0 % |
| Sodium 10mg | 0 % |
| Total Carbohydrate 32g | 12 % |
| Dietary Fiber 2g | 7 % |
| Total Sugars | 26g |
| Includes 0 Added Sugars | 0 % |
| Protein 1g | |