

Pre-Test

- 1 Name three kinds of tests that people with diabetes should have at least annually.
- 2 True or False? An A1c test is a 9-month weighted average of blood glucose levels.
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- 3 Name three lifestyle changes you can make to lower your cholesterol.

Intended to supplement your curriculum, these talking points cover main themes of the segment to help lead class discussion. They also serve as a review of the pre-test answers.

There are so many ways that tests and numbers help us manage our diabetes and our health, but it can be difficult to keep track of all those numbers and their significance. Some of the many important tests include:

- A1c.
- Blood pressure.
- Blood glucose levels.
- Cholesterol.
- Dilated eye exam.
- Foot exam.
- Microalbuminuria test.

An A1c test is a three month weighted average of blood glucose levels. Also called hemoglobin A1c or glycosylated (gly-KOH-sih-lay-ted) hemoglobin, the test shows the amount of glucose that sticks to red blood cells, which is proportional to the amount of glucose in the blood.

- People with diabetes should have their A1c tested at least twice a year, and more often if they have changed treatment regimens or haven't met their control goals.
- ADA goal is 7% or less, AACE goal is 6.5% or less. Talk to your doctor about setting a goal that is right for you.

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance found among the lipids (fats) in the bloodstream and in all cells. Cholesterol comes in several forms, most notable of which are "good" and "bad" cholesterol. Triglycerides are another type of fat that circulates in the bloodstream. The recommended goals for cholesterol are:

- HDL (good) cholesterol — >40 mg/dl (men); >50 mg/dl (women).
- LDL (bad) cholesterol — <100 mg/dl.
- Triglycerides — <150 mg/dl.

Here are some lifestyle changes you can implement to help lower your cholesterol.

- First and foremost, keep your blood glucose levels under control.
- Work with your medical team to develop a meal plan that you can stick with.
- Use less oil, butter, margarine, and other fats when cooking.
- Choose low-fat dairy products.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Choose whole-grains for cereals and breads.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per day.
- If you smoke — quit!
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Blood pressure levels are another concern for people with diabetes. Blood pressure increases when arteries are narrowed, due to atherosclerosis or to chronically high blood glucose levels, and blood flow is restricted. The recommended levels for blood pressure are:

- Normal blood pressure is defined as 120/80 mmHG for people without diabetes.
- <130/80 mmHG for those with diabetes and/or chronic kidney disease.

The first number is the systolic blood pressure reading, and it represents the maximum pressure exerted with the heart contracts. The second number is the diastolic blood pressure reading, and it represents the pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest.

Pre-Test Answer Key: 1) A1c, blood pressure, cholesterol, etc.; 2) F; 3) maintain tight blood glucose control, maintain a healthy weight, get 30 minutes of exercise daily, etc.

- 1 What is the recommended LDL (bad) cholesterol level for people with diabetes?

- 2 In your blood pressure readings, the top number (systolic) represents the heart _____ and the bottom number (diastolic) represents the heart _____.

- 3 True or False? An A1c is a 3-month weighted average of blood glucose levels.

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- 1 Ask your group members to bring in a copy of their latest lab report. Talk about what their numbers mean.
- 2 Take blood pressure readings for your group members. Discuss the importance of knowing your numbers and what steps can be taken to keep everything in range.
- 3 Have a Professional Organizer visit your group and help members get their medical records, lab tests and other diabetes-related paperwork organized, making the management of all their numbers seem a little less daunting. Have them brainstorm tips as to how they can better organize their diabetes life.

Additional Resources

- *The Joslin Guide to Diabetes: Revised.* Richard S. Beaser and Amy P. Campbell. (2005 Fireside Books)