

High Blood Sugar

People who are just finding out that they have diabetes may have very high blood sugar levels to start. These numbers will come down with lifestyle changes and medications, if needed.

In the meantime, there are some precautions you'll need to take. Left unchecked, very high blood sugar levels can lead to dehydration, hospitalization, coma or worse.

Contact your physician right away if you experience:

- fever or illness for a couple of days and aren't getting better
- vomiting or diarrhea for more than 6 hours
- moderate to large amounts of ketones in your urine
- glucose levels higher than 300 (before meals)
- chest pain, difficulty breathing, fruity breath, dry, cracked lips or tongue
- you aren't certain what to do to take care of yourself

Checking Your Blood Sugar

Readings over 300 are considered high blood sugar. At these levels, you are likely to be dehydrated, which can lead to worsening blood sugar control and hospitalization.

When levels are high, be sure to:

- Drink plenty of calorie-free beverages. Aim for 2 cups per hour. Water, diet beverages, unsweetened iced tea and flavored, unsweetened sodas are fine.
- DO NOT use fruit juices, Koolaid or other sugary drinks to stay hydrated.
- Follow a normal meal plan. Your body still needs vitamins, minerals, protein, and calories from food. Do not skip meals, but keep them light and balanced. (See "The Plate Method.")
- Take your diabetes medication as directed by your physician.