

Diabetes – How to Choose the Right Diabetes Meter and Testing Strips for You

Diabetes was recognized as a serious illness as early as 1552 B.C., when Egyptian physician Hesy-Ra wrote a strange wasting disease with frequent urination as a symptom. But there appeared to be no constant way to properly diagnose or test for this disease.

However, it was the Greeks, who made the connection of the smell and taste of “honey-sweet” urine as a symptom of full blown diabetes. In fact it was “Greek physician Arateus who described a mysterious illness that involved “. . . the melting down of flesh and limbs into urine. ...”

And so testing for diabetes was done by tasting urine, until the early 19th century (you can see why diabetes was seldom diagnosed in adults over the centuries). Some physicians recommended self testing however.

By this time scientists and doctors had determined that sugar in the urine was caused by a malfunction of the pancreas. About the same time the first chemical tests to detect the presence of sugar in urine were developed.

Testing urine for the presence of sugar remained the standard until 1915-1920 when widespread blood glucose testing in clinics became feasible.

Still, the first non-lab glucose meter was the Ames Reflectance Meter which was used in hospitals in the US in the 70s. It was over 10 long and had to be plugged into a power outlet, but compared to the time-consuming process of sending blood samples off to a lab; it was literally a life saver.

But it wasn't until the 1980's that a truly portable blood glucose testing meters and strips designed for home use became available to the general public. But now diabetics have over 25 different models of meters with testing strips to choose from.

Tips for Choosing the Right Glucose Meter

- Test Strips: the first consideration you should think about is testing strips. Testing strips can only be used once and are the most important part of the whole procedure. Some meters use discs or drums instead of individual strips, which makes one-handed testing easier.

One drawback to strips is that each batch of strips is slightly different and you must recalibrate or “code” each batch into the meter to get a correct reading. If done incorrectly, an insulin-dependent diabetic may accidentally inject too much insulin; increasing the risk of causing extreme low blood sugars, which can prove fatal.

The latest generation of glucose meters offers testing strips that come with automatic coding technology. But these testing strips can be more expensive than others.

- Cost: After your initial investment in a glucose meter, testing strips will be your main expense. Type 1 and other insulin-dependent diabetics, may have to test their blood sugar levels as much as 10-12 times a day. With testing strips prices running from \$.35 to \$1.00 per strip, you must look carefully at costs over time.

Now that you know more about diabetes testing strips and meters, you will be able to choose a monitoring system that fits both your lifestyle and you budget.