

Maintaining a Healthy Hemoglobin A1C

Hemoglobin A1C is a blood test that measures average blood sugar levels over a 3-month time period. Your doctor might order a hemoglobin A1C (Hgb A1C) to monitor your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes. Having a high Hgb A1C puts you at a greater risk for complications after surgery. Individuals with diabetes monitor their A1C regularly, but patients preparing for surgery should also have an A1C checked to make sure blood sugar levels are within a normal range.

A hemoglobin A1C less than 8% lessens your risk of post-operative complications. Surgery may be delayed or cancelled if your A1C is greater than 8%.

If your Hgb A1C is over 8%, you are at a greater risk for surgical complications, such as

- Surgical site infection
- Wound healing issues
- Delayed wound healing
- Urinary tract infection
- Readmission to the hospital

What are some ways to lower your A1C?

Diet

- Aim for a diet rich in protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Limit refined sugar and carbohydrates
- Consume mostly whole, unprocessed, foods such as fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and eggs.

Exercise

- Get physical activity daily
- Use cardio (walking, swimming, running) along with strength training (weightlifting, strength classes) in your routines

Weight Management

- If overweight or obese, losing even a small amount of weight can significantly improve hemoglobin A1C
- Make lifestyle changes to allow for weight loss

Medications

- Medications can be used along with diet, exercise, and weight management
- Insulin, Metformin, and GLP-1 agonists are some commonly used medications that help manage blood sugar levels
- Medications should be personalized to meet the specific needs of each patient and followed by a medical doctor