**UNDERSTANDING BLOOD SUGAR AND CONTROL**

Your blood sugar is an essential measure of your health. Too much sugar in the blood is the common factor between all types of diabetes. And even though sugar sometimes gets a bad rap, it’s not always bad.

Many foods break down into blood sugar, which is used for energy to fuel our brain, heart, and muscles. Blood sugar either comes from the food we eat or is made by the liver. It’s usually found in two places; in the blood stream as it is carried to all of our organs and cells, and inside the cells where it is changed into energy.

If you're struggling to manage your blood sugar levels, you’re not alone. With the latest tools and strategies, you can take the right steps to manage your blood sugar, prevent serious complications, and feel your best while living with diabetes.

**Factors affecting blood sugar**

Before you had diabetes, no matter what you ate or how active you were, your blood sugar levels stayed within a normal range. But with diabetes, your blood sugar level can rise higher and some diabetes medications can make them go lower than normal. Many factors can change your blood sugar levels. Learning about these can help control your blood sugar levels.

You can use your blood sugar (blood glucose) levels to make decisions about food and activity. These decisions can help you delay or prevent diabetes complications such as heart attack, kidney disease, blindness, and amputation.

**What can make my blood sugar rise?**

* Too much food, like a meal or snack with more carbohydrates than usual
* Not being active
* Not enough insulin or oral diabetes medications
* Side effects from other medications, such as steroids, anti-psychotic medications
* Illness – your body releases hormones to fight the illness, and those hormones raise blood sugar levels
* Stress, which can produce hormones that raise blood sugar levels
* Short- or long-term pain, like pain from a sunburn – your body releases hormones that raise sugar levels
* Menstrual periods, which cause changes in hormone levels
* Dehydration

**What can make my blood sugar fall?**

* Not enough food, like a meal or snack with fewer carbohydrates than usual, missing a meal or snack
* Alcohol, especially on an empty stomach
* Too much insulin or oral diabetes medications
* Side effects from other medications
* More physical activity or exercise than usual – physical activity makes your body more sensitive to insulin and can lower blood sugar.

**How can I track my blood sugar?**

There are two ways to keep track of your blood sugar levels:

* using a blood glucose meter to measure your blood sugar level at that moment
* getting an A1C at least twice a year to find out your average blood sugar for the past 2 to 3 months