

Hemoglobin A1C Testing

What is a hemoglobin A1C (A1C) test?

A1C is a common blood test for diagnosing diabetes and monitoring blood sugar levels. This test measures the average blood sugar level over the past three months by checking how much hemoglobin in red blood cells is bound to sugar. **No fasting is needed.** A high A1C level may indicate prediabetes or diabetes. This test can also help track how well blood sugar is managed in people with known diabetes.

How does A1C testing differ from blood glucose (blood sugar) testing?

Blood glucose (blood sugar) testing directly measures the amount of glucose in the blood at the time the sample is drawn. Blood glucose levels go up and down throughout the day due to many factors, including recent food or drink intake, activity level and more. The A1C test instead measures the percentage of hemoglobin – the oxygen-carrying molecule inside the red blood cells – that is linked to glucose. The A1C level reflects the average blood sugar over the prior three months before testing. Unlike the blood glucose test, the A1C test is not affected by recent food or drink intake, or activity level.

Why is the Red Cross testing blood, platelet and plasma donors' A1C levels?

The Red Cross values the health and well-being of our blood donors. We are committed to providing these generous individuals with valuable information to maintain their health to help bridge existing care gaps in communities across the country.

During the month of March, the Red Cross will expand its health offerings to include A1C screening, a test commonly used to screen for prediabetes and diabetes, to all donors who successfully give blood, platelets or plasma. More than 38 million people in the U.S. have diabetes. Approximately 90% of these people have Type 2 diabetes. Individuals with prediabetes or early Type 2 diabetes rarely experience symptoms until their diabetes has advanced to the point of organ damage. This is one reason why 8.7 million people in the U.S. have undiagnosed diabetes and approximately 80% of people with prediabetes are unaware they have it.

The American Diabetes Association recommends that those with diabetes receive a regular health checkup, hemoglobin A1C (A1C) test and cholesterol test at least once a year to ensure

their disease is being properly managed. Unfortunately, a study done by Johns Hopkins University found that fewer than half of individuals 65 years and older with diabetes met those goals, and only a quarter of patients under the age of 65, met those goals.

The A1C test is commonly used to screen for prediabetes and diabetes. The test measures an individual's average blood sugar level over the past three months. An elevated A1C level may indicate that a person has prediabetes or diabetes. For individuals with known diabetic and prediabetic conditions, an A1C test helps determine how well their treatment plan is managing their blood sugar levels. ***The test does not require individuals to fast. This is noteworthy because eating a nutritious meal prior to blood donation is important.***

Is the Red Cross testing for gestational diabetes?

No. A1C testing is not an approved screening for gestational diabetes. Additionally, individuals who are pregnant are not eligible to give blood.

Should donors fast before having their blood sample drawn for A1C testing alongside blood donation?

No, the A1C test does **NOT** require individuals to fast. This is noteworthy because eating a nutritious meal prior to blood donation is important.

Will there be a charge for this test?

No. Like other blood donation screenings, A1C testing is part of the blood donation testing process that occurs at no charge to the donor.

How is the Red Cross able to fund A1C testing if it's not charging donors?

The Red Cross is working to rally the support of generous financial donors to help fund this program. We are also looking into other possible funding sources.

How long will the Red Cross be doing A1C testing?

The Red Cross plans to screen all successful blood, platelet, and plasma donations during the month of March. A1C testing will also be performed on successful donations during the months of August and November. More information on future testing will be shared in the coming months.

What does it mean to have an elevated A1C level?

An elevated A1C test result, greater than or equal to 5.7%, indicates that a donor has had blood sugar levels averaging higher than the normal range over the past three months. This can indicate that a donor has prediabetes or diabetes.

- An A1C result that is 5.7%-6.4% could indicate prediabetes.
- An A1C result of 6.5% or higher could indicate diabetes.

Donors who receive an elevated A1C test result will receive a letter in the mail from the Red Cross providing additional information and are encouraged to contact their medical provider.

What if I don't have the app or have internet access? How can I get my test results?

The Red Cross encourages donors to access their testing results through our Red Cross Blood Donor App or their donor account at RedCrossBlood.org. If you do not have access to the Red Cross Blood Donor App or RedCrossBlood.org, please wait 14 days after your donation and then call our Red Cross Donor and Client Support Center at 1-866-236-3276 to request your A1C result.

Can an elevated A1C test result impact my ability to give blood?

Individuals with prediabetes or diabetes are generally eligible to donate blood, platelets and plasma if they are feeling well and their diabetes is well-controlled. An elevated A1C level does

not necessarily make a person ineligible to donate.

Is this A1C test FDA approved?

The Red Cross is testing successful donations using the Abbott Hemoglobin A1C assay on the Alinity c analyzer system for A1C levels, a key indicator of prediabetes and diabetes. This screening test is authorized for use by the FDA and is highly accurate.

Will the Red Cross be providing donor A1C test results to anyone besides the donor?

No. The Red Cross will not release your A1C test result or any other test result without your written permission unless required by law. The Red Cross will report an elevated A1C test result in writing to the individual donor. We do encourage donors who receive an elevated A1C test result to consult their medical provider to discuss their test results and pursue additional confirmatory testing.

What does it mean to have normal A1C level?

An A1C result in the normal range, less than 5.7%, generally indicates that a donor does not have prediabetes or diabetes, or that their blood sugar is well-controlled with current management of diabetes. The A1C testing may not be accurate or interpretable in individuals with certain conditions, including those who are pregnant or have recently been pregnant.

What if a donor does not want to have their donation tested for A1C?

The Red Cross will be testing all successful donations for A1C during the month of March 2025. Individual donors will not have the ability to opt out of this testing. If a donor does not wish to have their A1C levels tested, they are encouraged to make an appointment before or after testing will be offered in March.

Is the Red Cross diagnosing prediabetes or diabetes in donors?

No. While the Red Cross provides information to help diagnose prediabetes or diabetes, it is important individuals see a physician or health care provider for formal diagnosis and treatment recommendations.

Why don't I see a test result?

Red Cross donors can expect to receive the results of their A1C test within one to two weeks through our Red Cross Blood Donor App or their donor account at RedCrossBlood.org.

Donors will need to make a successful donation during the designated testing period to receive A1C test results. Per standard procedures, only successful donations are sent to our laboratory for testing. While rare, some donations made during the designated testing period may not be able to be tested due to processing issues.

Do donors need to have a successful donation to receive an A1C result?

Yes. Donors will need to have a successful donation to receive A1C results. Per standard donation procedure, only successful donations are sent to our laboratory for testing.

What if someone is not eligible to give blood, can they still receive an A1C test?

An individual will need to meet FDA blood donor eligibility guidelines and complete a successful blood, platelet or plasma donation to receive A1C testing of their donation.

What type of A1C test is the Red Cross using?

The Red Cross is using the Abbott Laboratories A1C assay on the Alinity c analyzer system. This test is used to detect the amount of blood hemoglobin that is bound to glucose.

How accurate is this A1C test?

The A1C testing the Red Cross is using is highly accurate and effective. As with all tests, incorrect results can occur. This is why those who receive an elevated result are encouraged to consult their medical provider for confirmatory testing and discuss what their results mean for them.

Will I receive my A1C test result after every donation?

The Red Cross will be providing A1C testing during the months of March, August, and November in 2025. Donors who successfully donate during one of these testing periods will receive one test result within a 12-month time frame. This is because the A1C test reflects an individual's average blood sugar over the prior three months before testing, and testing is recommended once every one to three years for people with A1C levels in the normal range.

When will donors be notified of their test results? And how can donors access their test results?

Red Cross donors can expect to receive the results of their A1C testing within one to two weeks through our Red Cross Blood Donor App or in their donor account at [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org).

Why don't I see the option to view the A1C test results on the Blood Donor App?

The ability to view A1C test results will be on the home screen of the Red Cross Blood Donor App once the result is available. If that option is not appearing, donors may need to update to the latest version of the app. The most recent version of the app can be downloaded from the App Store (iOS devices) or Google Play (Android devices).