

DIABETES IN CANADA

CDA partnership helps broaden support

People with diabetes find welcome support from pharmacists

Monitoring blood glucose levels, injecting insulin, taking medication, eating the right foods, undergoing frequent tests – all this and more may be part of the often overwhelming responsibilities of a person trying to manage their diabetes. Increasingly, Canadians with this disease are looking for support from the health care provider they tend to see the most, their community pharmacist.

Patients' quest for diabetes advice and help from pharmacists has grown over the years, and Shoppers Drug Mart has responded to this rising demand with an array of programs, services and tools, including some developed in partnership with the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA).

"It's an area where a pharmacist can really make an impact," says Shelley Diamond, a pharmacist who is responsible for the Shoppers Drug Mart diabetes educational program. "Some diabetes education centres in communities have three- to six-month waiting lists. Pharmacists are



People living with diabetes find welcome support at Shoppers Drug Mart thanks to an array of programs it has developed, some in partnership with the Canadian Diabetes Association. PHOTO: SHOPPERS DRUG MART

accessible health care professionals who can be a key resource for people with diabetes, many of them struggling with information overload."

Shoppers has been expanding its diabetes services since it began 14 years ago to train pharmacists in blood glucose monitoring and to hold periodic diabetes clinic days. "About four years ago, we moved away from clinic days, so we could have a larger

reach," Ms. Diamond says. "Now, our pharmacists provide patients with a valuable intervention on diabetes at the time they get their prescription, giving them tips on a specific aspect of the disease, such as how to reduce their risk of heart disease."

The pharmacist role is all the more important today, she adds, with a growing number of people on oral diabetes medications and insulin treat-

ment starting much sooner than it used to for people living with type 2 diabetes.

Shoppers has approximately 150 pharmacists nationally who are Certified Diabetes Educators with advanced knowledge and training in diabetes. The retailer helps pharmacists obtain the certification by providing a study program that includes mentoring from Certified Diabetes Educator nurses and

dietitians in the Diabetes Education Centre at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital.

Shoppers pharmacies also offer patients a number of tools, including a three-month blood glucose log book and a wallet-sized diabetes monitoring record for keeping track of tests.

The CDA and Shoppers are partners in education. The pharmacy chain has developed an information resource

that responds to 52 questions about diabetes, ranging from "What can I eat to control my diabetes?" to "What is an insulin pump?" Not only is this information approved by the CDA, Shoppers is the pharmacy chain responsible for distributing an easy-to-read summary of the Canadian Diabetes Association 2008 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes in Canada, with the latest information on managing the disease.

"Working with the leading retail pharmacy chain in Canada is a powerful partnership that helps us extend the reach of our messages to Canadians with diabetes," says Christina Beyer, CDA senior manager, Corporate Partnerships. "As our exclusive pharmacy retail partner in the dissemination of the 2008 guidelines to consumers, Shoppers is providing us with valuable support – using its extensive national network to provide up-to-date information and the best possible care to Canadians affected by diabetes." ■

CDA Clinical Practice Guidelines

Understanding blood glucose levels critical in diabetes management

Most people with diabetes understand that to stay healthy, they need to manage their blood glucose levels. What they may not understand as clearly is exactly why this is important and how these levels affect their health.

The Canadian Diabetes

Association 2008 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes in Canada recommends target blood glucose levels for most adults with diabetes:

- A1C of 7 per cent or lower
- Fasting blood sugars of 4-7 mmol/L

• Post-meal (two hours after the start of the meal) blood sugars of 5-10 mmol/L

o Post-meal blood sugars of 5-8 mmol/L if necessary to reach an A1C of 7 per cent or lower

A person with diabetes can use a blood glucose monitor to check his or her own levels.

The numeric reading helps the patient to understand how close they are to their target range at any given moment. Another very important test, which is conducted at the lab, is the A1C – and every patient with diabetes should be asking for those results.

According to Dr. Ian Blumer, a diabetes specialist practicing in Ajax, Ontario, and author of Diabetes for Dummies, the A1C test helps to provide an understanding of the bigger picture. "Your A1C reflects your average blood glucose readings over three to four months," says Dr. Blumer. "This overall estimate is important because it tells us the likelihood of someone developing complications of diabetes, such as kidney disease, nerve damage and blindness. It is not a replacement for finger prick testing, which provides crucial, specific and immediate information."

Finger prick testing and A1C results work in tandem. If a patient is having difficulty

reaching the target A1C level of 7 per cent or lower, even though their fasting blood glucose levels are within the target range, their doctor may recommend a tighter post-meal target of 5-8 mmol/L. The only way to know if you're reaching this goal is to test.

Testing can seem like an inconvenience, it can be uncomfortable, and it can be costly. Because of these potential deterrents, Dr. Blumer explains that it needs to be worthwhile. "Patients need to understand what the numbers mean and what to do with the information. They need to understand how to reach their pre- and post-meal targets and what to do if these targets aren't being met. If a person doesn't know how to interpret their readings and what to do with the results, testing is of little value."

This point is also strongly emphasized by Lori Berard, diabetes nurse educator and research manager, Diabetes Research Group in Winnipeg,

Manitoba. "With diabetes, many factors are at play. When we are provided with post-meal test results, along with notes about food choices, medications taken – including insulin doses – and activity, we can start to identify patterns. These patterns allow us to work with our patients to determine which choices are good for blood glucose levels, and which are not. This helps our patients to learn and plan for the future."

To fully understand when to test, why and what to do with your results, Ms. Berard strongly recommends finding a source of education. "Ask your doctor to refer you to you a local diabetes educator. You can also visit the Canadian Diabetes Association website at www.diabetes.ca or contact your local branch," she says, adding, "Talk to your pharmacist – he or she can be a valuable source of information. Test with understanding. This is short-term work with long-term gain: securing good health down the road." ■

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CDA blood glucose targets for people with diabetes*

	A1C	Fasting blood glucose	Blood glucose two hours after the start of a meal
Target for most patients with diabetes	≤7%	4 to 7 mmol/L	5 to 10 mmol/L (5 to 8 mmol/L if A1C targets are not being met)

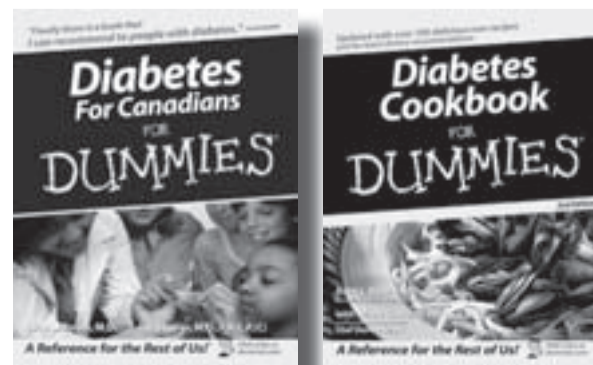
*These targets are for most adults with diabetes and serve as a guide. They do not apply to children 12 years of age or under, or pregnant women. Talk to your doctor about YOUR blood glucose target ranges.

What is an A1C?

A1C is a blood test that indicates an average of your overall blood glucose levels over the past three to four months.

Also known as a hemoglobin A1C, glycosylated hemoglobin, HgbA1C and HbA1C, the A1C test levels are measured in different units and on a different scale than is blood glucose. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, those living with the disease are well advised to ask their physician about the A1C as staying in-target can reduce the potential for long-term complications from diabetes. Source: www.ourdiabetes.com

Take Control of Your Diabetes!



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