



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Understanding Incidentally High Blood Sugar Levels in the Emergency Department

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Your blood sugar today was:



Please let us know if you need this information in
another language or format.

Contents	Page
Introduction	3
Why Are Routine Tests Done?	3
What Is a High Blood Sugar Reading?	3
Does a High Reading Mean I Have Diabetes?	4
Why Might My Blood Sugar Be High in the Emergency Department?	4
What Should I Do Next?	5
Symptoms of Diabetes to Watch For	5
When to Seek Urgent Medical Attention	6
Symptoms That Can Be Reviewed by Your GP	6
Further Information	7

Introduction

This leaflet is designed to help you understand why routine blood tests are carried out in the emergency department, and what it means if you are told your blood sugar (glucose) level is higher than expected.

We aim to provide clear information and reassurance, so you know what to expect and what to do next.

Why Are Routine Tests Done?

When you come to the emergency department, doctors often carry out routine tests, including checking your blood sugar. These tests help us quickly assess your overall health and identify any issues that may need attention.

What Is a High Blood Sugar Reading?

A high blood sugar reading means that the amount of glucose in your blood is above the normal range at the time of testing. Glucose is a type of sugar your body uses for energy. Sometimes, high levels are found unexpectedly during tests for other reasons.

Does a High Reading Mean I Have Diabetes?

A high blood sugar reading can sometimes be a sign of diabetes, as this condition is characterised by higher-than-normal glucose levels in the blood. However, a single raised result does not always mean you have diabetes, and further tests are needed to make a diagnosis.

Many factors can affect your glucose levels, especially when you are unwell or under stress.

Further testing is needed to confirm any diagnosis.

Why Might My Blood Sugar Be High in the Emergency Department?

Acute illness, injury, or stress can temporarily raise your blood sugar. This is a normal response of the body and is often seen in people who do not have diabetes but is often identified in the Emergency Department. Your level may return to normal as you recover.

What Should I Do Next?

If you have been told you have a high blood sugar reading, it is a good idea to speak to your GP.

Once you are feeling better, your GP may suggest repeating the blood test to check your glucose levels again.

Symptoms of Diabetes to Watch For

If you have been told your blood sugar is high, it is important to be aware of the symptoms that could suggest diabetes. Common symptoms include:

- Feeling very thirsty.
- Urinating more often than usual, especially at night.
- Feeling very tired.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Blurred vision.
- Frequent infections (such as thrush or slow-healing wounds).

If you notice any of these symptoms, it is sensible to speak to your GP, who can arrange further tests and discuss your concerns.

When to Seek Urgent Medical Attention

Some symptoms require immediate medical attention, as they might signal a medical emergency:

- Breathlessness and rapid breathing.
- Confusion or drowsiness.
- Severe stomach pain or vomiting.
- Fruity-smelling breath.
- Loss of consciousness.

If you experience any of these symptoms, please seek help from the emergency department or call 999 straight away, as these could be signs of diabetic emergencies such as diabetic ketoacidosis or hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state.

Symptoms That Can Be Reviewed by Your GP

Other symptoms, such as increased thirst, tiredness, or mild changes in vision, can usually be discussed with your GP. Your GP can advise on further tests and management if needed.

If you have any concerns following a high blood sugar result, do not hesitate to contact your GP or healthcare provider for guidance. This can help determine if further action is needed.

Further Information

You can find more information about blood sugar and diabetes from the following resources:

NHS: High Blood Sugar (Hyperglycaemia)

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-sugar-hyperglycaemia/>



Diabetes UK 0345 123 2399

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your GP or healthcare provider for advice.

Remember, a single high blood sugar reading is often temporary and does not necessarily mean you have diabetes.

① If you have further concerns about your condition, please contact your GP. If you are not sure what to do, call 111 or get help from 111 online: <https://111.nhs.uk/>
[When to use NHS 111 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/)

To view this leaflet online visit our website:
<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/seecmsfile/?id=8734>
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