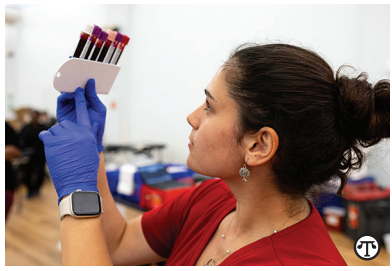
Health Awareness

You Could Have Prediabetes Without Knowing It

(NAPS)—Throughout November, National Diabetes Awareness Month, the American Red Cross is offering free A1C testing to blood and platelet donors, letting individuals learn more about their health while they help save lives.

The A1C test is commonly used to diagnose and monitor diabetes and measures a person's average blood sugar levels over three months.





People who donate blood or platelets with the Red Cross during November will receive a free A1C test.

Data from the Red Cross shows that one in five donors have elevated A1C levels, a finding that suggests the presence of prediabetes or diabetes among adults who generally consider themselves healthy. Since launching the initiative, the Red Cross has provided A1C results to more than 1.3 million donors, with over 250,000 receiving notifications of elevated levels.

To help explain why this test matters and what the results can mean, Dr. Maribel García Colón, a medical director with the American Red Cross, shares some key information.

1. What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that affects how the body regulates blood sugar.

- **Type 1 diabetes:** occurs when the body produces little or no insulin.
- **Type 2 diabetes (the most common form):** accounts for about 90-95% of cases and develops when the body becomes resistant to insulin or can no longer use it effectively.

2. Can I prevent it? What are the symptoms?

One important lesson from testing is that many people are living with prediabetes or diabetes without knowing it.

"The good news is that people can improve their blood sugar levels through exercise, healthy eating and other lifestyle changes. But first, they need to know where they stand because prediabetes and early Type 2 diabetes rarely cause noticeable symptoms until the disease has advanced. This is one reason 8.7 million people in the U.S. have undiagnosed diabetes and approximately 80% of people with prediabetes are unaware they have it," says Dr. Maribel.

3. How do I know if I'm at risk for diabetes?

While anyone can develop type 2 diabetes, some people face a higher risk.

Factors that deserve special attention include:

- A family history of diabetes.
- Being overweight or obese.
- Being over 45.
- Having high blood pressure or a history of gestational diabetes.
- Belonging to populations that have a higher genetic predisposition to the disease, including the Hispanic community.

If any of these risk factors apply to you, talk with your health care provider.

4. What should I do if I receive a high A1C result?

An elevated A1C result does not necessarily mean you have diabetes. However, it is an indication that you should follow up with a healthcare professional for a more comprehensive evaluation.

Identifying elevated blood sugar levels early can create an opportunity to make healthy changes that may help prevent or delay future complications. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these changes can reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by as much as 50%.



5. What should I do during a diabetes-related emergency?

Diabetic emergencies can happen when blood sugar levels become too high or too low. If you or someone in your household has diabetes, make sure those around you know how to recognize the warning signs and respond quickly.

Symptoms may include confusion, dizziness, difficulty speaking or walking, or appearing intoxicated. If someone has trouble breathing, experiences a seizure or becomes unresponsive, call 911 immediately. Keep emergency supplies and a quick source of sugar, such as juice or glucose tablets, readily available.

More Than a Blood Donation

Blood drives and donation centers allow the Red Cross to connect with people in their communities and provide valuable health information, including blood pressure readings, hemoglobin levels and A1C results.

For many individuals, this may be one of the few health screenings they receive all year, providing information they can discuss with their healthcare providers and helping identify health concerns earlier.

You can schedule your blood, platelet or AB Elite plasma donation today art https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive. As a special thank you, donors can get up to $20 in Gift Cards: a $10 Amazon Gift Card by email PLUS 500 bonus points, redeemable for a $10 e-gift card through Donor Rewards for all who come to give before Nov. 22. See RedCrossBlood.org/Maze for details.