



What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a lack of insulin or an inability to properly use insulin. Insulin is a natural hormone that allows blood sugar (glucose) to enter body cells. Body cells use this sugar as an energy source.

Why is it important for people with diabetes to manage their blood sugar?

When people have a lack of insulin or an inability to properly use insulin, blood sugar levels can rise too high. If these levels are not controlled, complications may develop over time, leading to an increased risk of a heart attack or damage to eyesight, nerves or kidneys.

How can I control my blood sugar levels?

- Proper diet and exercise are a good place to start.
- Close monitoring of blood sugar levels throughout the day is necessary.
- Different medications including insulin may be recommended. For more information about medications, please see Regence ConsumerRx: <http://www.regencerox.com/docs/consumerRx/diabetesMedications.pdf>.

What is the most reliable way to check blood sugar levels?

Currently the most reliable way to check blood sugar levels at home is by using a finger-stick blood glucose meter (glucometer). Glucometers measure blood sugar levels at a single point in time. Medication, diet, and exercise may need to be adjusted based on the results of blood sugar measurements.

What is a continuous glucose monitor (CGM)?

A CGM is a device that monitors blood sugar levels in body tissue (instead of blood) on a continuous basis throughout the day and night.

How does a CGM work?

- Small sensor wires are inserted under the skin in the upper arm or abdomen.
- The sensor measures body tissue sugar levels and sends information wirelessly to a small pager-sized device that can be clipped on a belt loop or carried in a purse.

What do I need to know to use a CGM safely?

- CGM readings need to be compared with glucometer readings one to several times a day and each time the sensor is changed. Check with your doctor for specific device recommendations.
- Sensors need to be replaced every 3-7 days, depending on the device.
- The FDA recommends CGM readings always be compared to glucometer readings before adjusting medications. Studies have shown there can be a 13-25% difference in how a CGM reads tissue sugar levels compared with how a glucometer reads blood sugar levels.

If glucometers are the most reliable way to measure blood sugar, why use a CGM?

A small group of people with diabetes have low blood sugar that goes undetected (hypoglycemic unawareness). In this group, symptoms develop rapidly and can be severe enough to put them or others at risk. Because this group often has difficulty achieving good control of blood sugar levels, a CGM can provide additional information that may help prevent dangerously low blood sugar levels from occurring.

Who might benefit from a CGM?

People with diabetes who:

- take insulin; and
- properly manage their diabetes, including diet, exercise and four or more fingersticks per day with insulin adjustment; and
- are either pregnant or who have recurrent, unexplained, severe, symptomatic hypoglycemia that puts them or others at risk; and
- are highly motivated to follow device instructions with a good understanding of how medications, diet, exercise, and glucometer testing affect blood sugar levels.

Who would not benefit from a CGM?

People who:

- do not take insulin for their diabetes; or
- are able to achieve good blood sugar control using a glucometer alone; or
- might not understand how to manage their diabetes; or
- might not be motivated to consistently change the CGM sensor or do the needed glucometer checks.

How effective is a CGM?

It is uncertain whether a CGM can improve the overall health of people with diabetes. There have been no long-term studies which show how a CGM can lessen complications from diabetes.

Are CGMs covered by Regence?

Yes, when criteria are met and preauthorization is given. You can find the criteria and more information about the effectiveness of CGMs in the Regence Medical Policy at:

<http://blue.regence.com/trgmedpol/dme/dme77.html>.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A CGM may provide additional information for the small group of people with diabetes who properly manage their diabetes, use insulin and still have severe hypoglycemic unawareness. A CGM needs to be used with a glucometer and is most effective when you have a good understanding of how to manage your diabetes.

Note: Regence physicians, nurses and pharmacists developed this summary to provide you with information about potential advantages and lack of advantages of continuous glucose monitors. This summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies and input from practicing doctors and specialists.