This handout will help you to learn about the A1C test: what it is and why it is important for people with type 2 diabetes.

What is the A1C test?
The A1C test is a blood test that shows the average amount of glucose in your blood over the past 3 months. Your A1C level is shown as a percentage: for example, 6.8%. This is different than the numbers that you see when you check your blood glucose at home. These numbers, which are shown in milligrams per deciliter, or mg/dL, give you a snapshot of your blood glucose level at that moment.

Because people with type 2 diabetes are used to seeing blood glucose numbers, it can be confusing to understand what the A1C test result means. The chart on the left lists A1C levels in one column and the average estimated glucose in the next column. For example, if your A1C is 8.5%, that means that your average blood glucose over the past 3 months has been around 197 mg/dL.

What should my A1C and estimated average glucose levels be?
The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends an A1C level of less than 7% for most adults with type 2 diabetes, which is an estimated average glucose of 154 mg/dL. No matter what your A1C is, the closer you get to 7%, the better your chances for preventing health problems from diabetes.

How often should my A1C be tested?
The ADA recommends two A1C tests per year for people with type 2 diabetes whose glucose levels are at goal. Your healthcare provider may test your A1C more often if you are not at your goal level.

REFERENCES: