

What is glycohemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is a protein molecule inside your red blood cells that carries oxygen to all the cells and tissues of your body. Glucose in your bloodstream enters your red blood cells and links up with hemoglobin (or "glycosylates") to form *glycohemoglobin*. If you have diabetes and your blood glucose levels are not controlled you will have two or three times more glycohemoglobin in your body than normal.

What is the glycohemoglobin (GHb) test?

The GHb test is a blood test that measures the amount of glycosylated haemoglobin (glycohemoglobin) in your blood. Blood is drawn from a vein in the arm or hand - you only need to provide one drop, and you can provide this at any time of day. Your doctor will translate your GHb result into your average blood glucose level, and this information will help to determine how well you are responding to treatment, or if your treatment needs to be changed.

I have type I diabetes. Is the (GHb) test suitable for me?

The test can be used for either insulin-dependent (type I) diabetes or non-insulin-dependent (type II) diabetes.

How is the GHb result calculated?

The GHb result is a "weighted average" rather than a simple average of all your blood glucose level ups-and-downs over the past few months. An individual red blood cell lives about four months, so the blood glucose levels from three to four months ago contribute only about 10 percent to the result, as most of the red blood cells that were around then will have died off. Blood glucose levels from the past month contribute about 50% to the result.

How often will I need to be tested?

Talk to your doctor about how frequently you should be tested. This will probably be at least twice a year - if you have problems controlling your blood glucose levels you may be advised to take the test four times a year. Sometimes women are advised to take additional 'fructosamine' tests during pregnancy, in order to monitor change over shorter periods of time.