Patient information

Changes to HbA1c testing at Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

What has changed at the laboratory for HbA1c testing?

The laboratory have changed the machine they use to measure HbA1c in your blood sample. The new machine can look at how much haemoglobin you have in your blood and if you have a different type of haemoglobin in your blood, these are important when measuring HbA1c to make sure it reliably reflects what your blood sugar levels have been over the past 3 months.

What does this mean for me?

Most people will not be impacted by this change. However, as the new HbA1c machine has better ability to detect situations where HbA1c results would be unreliable, for example due to anaemia or different types of haemoglobin, some people in these situations will encounter a change in whether they have HbA1c results reported. This is more likely to affect tests which are used for diagnosing diabetes rather than those for monitoring diabetes.

My healthcare team has asked for a HbA1c to check if I have diabetes, why is there no HbA1c result on my report?

The comment on the report should explain exactly why no result has been provided.

The new HbA1c machine has improved the quality of testing and can now tell if there is something present that may mean the HbA1c result would not reliably reflect your blood sugar levels over the past 3 months. If the machine finds that such a situation is present, the HbA1c result would not be reported. For example if your haemoglobin is very low then your HbA1c result would be considered unreliable and shouldn't be used to decide if you have diabetes or not.

If HbA1c is not a reliable test to diagnose diabetes for you a fasting glucose should be done instead.

I have diabetes, why is there no HbA1c result on my report?

This should only happen very rarely. The comment on the report should explain exactly why no result has been provided.

If a HbA1c result is not available to monitor your diabetes your capillary blood glucose measurements should be used to help assess your glucose control.