Guide to Diabetes Language

Your team at UC Davis Health wants you to feel respected and included as the leading member of your health care team. To do that, we want to use (and want YOU to use) accurate and also positive language around diabetes.

Here is a quick guide for some of the diabetes-specific words that are used in this handbook. You will likely continue to hear your diabetes team use these words in future visits.

- **Blood glucose (BG)** – carbohydrates break down into glucose in the bloodstream. Glucose is a simple sugar in the blood that is used by the cells of the body for energy. Blood glucose is the same as “blood sugar”, and you will hear both terms used.

- **CDE (or CDCES)** – you may see these letters after the name of some of the people on your diabetes team; they stand for “Certified Diabetes Educator” or “Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist.” Healthcare workers with this specialty are experts in diabetes and providing education to people with diabetes.

- **DKA (or diabetic ketoacidosis)** – a serious condition caused by lack of insulin. When the body does not make or have enough insulin, it cannot use glucose for energy and begins to break down fat instead. This creates a buildup of acids in the blood stream and can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis.

- **Endocrinology or Endocrinologist** – the field of medicine focused on the endocrine system, which includes glands and hormones. An endocrinologist is an expert in that field, which includes diabetes. Your endocrinologist is your diabetes doctor.

- **Glucometer (glucose meter)** – home measurement tool you use to test the amount of glucose in your blood

- **Hemoglobin A1c (HgbA1c, A1c)** – a blood test that estimates your average BG level for the past 2-3 months. It is a measurement of the percent of blood glucose attached to the oxygen-carrying protein in red blood cells.

- **Ketones** – acids in the bloodstream that are produced by the breakdown of fat in the when there is not enough insulin to use glucose for energy.

- **Pancreas** – an organ of the body that plays many roles in bodily functions; related to diabetes, the pancreas creates and releases hormones into the blood stream. Those hormones include insulin – which lowers blood glucose – and glucagon – which raises blood glucose.