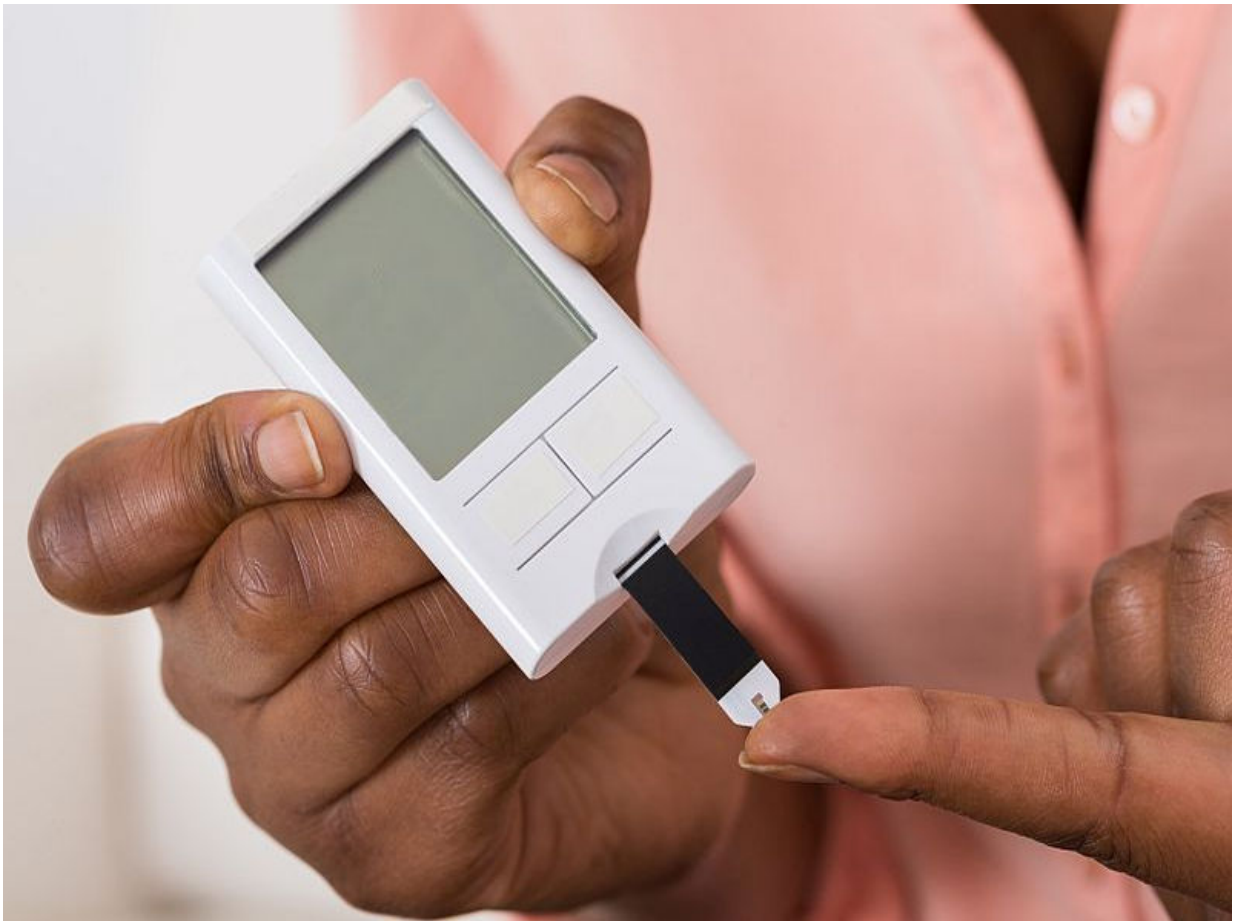


FDA warns diabetics against use of secondhand test strips

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(HealthDay)—Millions of Americans with diabetes use glucose meters

and test strips to monitor their blood sugar, but affording those supplies can be a challenge.

And that leads some people to use secondhand test strips to save money.

It's legal for people to sell unused secondhand test strips. But the U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises against buying or selling pre-owned test strips because they may give incorrect results and may not be safe to use with a [glucose](#) meter.

"Test strips should be properly stored to give accurate results," according to the FDA.

"If you buy pre-owned strips, it is hard to know whether the strips were stored properly. Test strips also could be expired. A lack of proper storage or using expired strips could put you at risk for getting incorrect results from your glucose meter. And incorrect results can put you at risk for serious health complications—and even death," the FDA said.

In addition, test strip vials may have been opened by another person and could contain small amounts of blood, putting you at risk for infection, the agency said.

Secondhand test strips may have been tampered with and unsafe to use. For example, the expiration dates might have been changed or covered up, the FDA said.

Some pre-owned test strips also may not have been cleared by the FDA for sale in the United States. Signs of unsafe strips include instructions that aren't in English or strips that look different than other strips of the same brand.

The FDA recommends buying new, unopened vials of glucose test strips

designed specifically for your meter.

"Talk to your [health care provider](#) if you are not sure where to buy test strips for your glucose meter or if you cannot afford to buy the test strips recommended for use with your meter," the agency advised.

The FDA also said to make sure you get the most from your [test strips](#). Be sure to use the control solution that comes with your meter to check accuracy as directed.

Also, use your meter to [test](#) your [blood sugar](#) in front of your doctor or diabetes educator to ensure you're doing everything properly.

And, make sure you clean and disinfect your glucose meter as directed by the manufacturer, the FDA suggested.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease has more on [financial help for diabetes care](#).

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