

Integrating type 1 diabetes screening into primary care: A stepwise EHR approach

Type 1 diabetes (T1D) is an autoimmune condition that progresses through two presymptomatic stages before the onset of clinical symptoms in stage 3. These early stages are marked by circulating islet autoantibodies, which are detectable via validated screening panels, and by subclinical dysglycemia in stage 2.^{1,2} Early detection and monitoring of presymptomatic T1D can help reduce the risk of diabetic ketoacidosis, enable timely interventions and improve long-term outcomes.¹⁻³

By taking the following practical steps, your primary care practice can use its EHR system to integrate T1D screening into existing clinical workflows.

EHR integration steps for T1D screening

STEP 1. Identify patients at higher risk for T1D

- Use EHR filters to flag patients who have a family history of T1D or other known genetic risk or have a personal or family history of other autoimmune conditions (e.g., celiac disease, autoimmune thyroid diseases).^{2,4}
- Implement best practice advisories to prompt T1D screening during office visits.

STEP 2. Order islet autoantibody screening

- Integrate standardized order sets for autoantibody panels that include insulin (IAA), glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD), islet antigen 2 (IA-2) and zinc transporter 8 (ZnT8).²⁻⁴
- Ensure CPT codes are mapped correctly for billing and documentation.

STEP 3. Document and track results

- Create structured data fields for autoantibody test results, metabolic measures (e.g., blood glucose, A1C), T1D staging and follow-up plans (e.g., rescreening, monitoring).

STEP 4. Communicate results and next steps

- Develop templated clinical notes for positive autoantibody test results, risk communication and referrals.
- Enable secure messaging via the patient portal for education and next steps.

STEP 5. Follow up and monitor^{2,3}

- Use flowsheets or dashboards to flag positive autoantibody test results and monitor trends in metabolic measures.
- Schedule periodic follow-up visits for patients with positive autoantibody test results.
- Incorporate monitoring protocols into care plans and use registries to track outcomes over time.

Tips for successful T1D screening integration

- Identify a T1D screening program champion – Assign a lead clinician to oversee implementation.²
- Train staff – Educate clinical teams on T1D screening, staging and monitoring protocols.
- Use decision support tools – Leverage EHR alerts and reminders.
- Collaborate with labs – Ensure timely and accurate processing of islet autoantibody tests.
- Engage patients – Provide educational materials and support resources.

References

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2. Leichter SB, Felton JL, Geno Rasmussen C, et al. Establishing screening programs for presymptomatic type 1 diabetes: practical guidance for diabetes care providers. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2025;110(8):2371-2382.
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