

keeping in shape

Notes

♥ *Check blood glucose before starting the activity and more frequently during and after to learn how your body responds to exercise.* ♥

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Let's Get Physical: Diabetes and Physical Activity

Why should I exercise if I have diabetes?

Physical activity has been shown to help those with diabetes by lowering blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol. It can help to decrease stress and make you feel better. It strengthens your heart, muscles and bones and improves blood flow. Being active can keep you flexible and help you to control your weight.

What kind of activities help?

Activity does not have to be formal exercise. All types of activity, even doing your household chores, can be helpful to you. Even if you haven't been active previously, starting with some simple steps can get you on the road to better diabetes control.

There are activities which raise your heart rate and breathing rate and work your muscles; these are aerobic activities. Activities which help develop muscle and strengthen bones are called strength training and those that include stretching and keep joints flexible are called flexibility exercises. Remember to choose an activity that you enjoy.

Are there activities I should avoid?

If you have diabetes-related health issues which affect your heart, feet, eyes, kidneys, blood vessels or nervous system, certain activities may need to be avoided. Talk to

your health care provider before starting any activity routine to see if these restrictions apply to you. Your health care provider may order some special tests before giving you the okay for an exercise program.

Will my blood glucose drop too low if I exercise?

Adding physical activity can put you at risk for low blood glucose if you are taking certain medicines, including insulin, to treat your diabetes. To help prevent this, check blood glucose before starting the activity and more frequently during and after to learn how your body responds to exercise. Low blood glucose can happen even hours after the activity. Adjust your food intake if needed and always keep a source of carbohydrate with you to treat low blood glucose.

How activity helps

Being physically active has many benefits. Besides lowering your blood glucose, being physically active can help make your heart stronger, lower your blood pressure, help lower your cholesterol level, relieve stress and anxiety and lift your spirits. Physical activity makes you burn calories and along with a healthy eating plan, can help you to lose weight. It is important to remember that physical activity can have a lowering effect on your blood glucose for hours after you do it so pay special attention to checking your blood glucose to see how activity affects you.

♥ *All types of activity, even doing your household chores, can be helpful to you.* ♥

Types of Activity

You don't have to join a gym or health club to get the benefits of being active. For some people this may be the right choice but others may choose a different route.

Aerobic activity: raises your heart and breathing rate and works your muscles. You should try for about 30 minutes total a day. Don't worry if you can't do it all at once. Many people start out with 5-10 minutes a day and work their way up. Some people do three 10-minute sessions of activity a day to get their 30 minutes in. Do what works for you.

Many people find using a step-counter to be a useful tool. Wear the step-counter each day for a week and record the number of steps you do per day. At the end of a week, average out what your steps per day are. This gives you a starting point based on your current level of activity. Now set a goal for how much you'd like to increase your activity. Follow the same plan as the previous week and continue to set new goals along the way.

The actual number of steps that you are averaging is not as important as the increase in daily steps over time.

Strength training builds strong bones and muscles. Aim for doing this type of activity 2-3 times a week.

Some Examples of Strength Training Activities:

- Lifting light weights, such as soup cans, at home
- Using weights and resistance bands

You may want to look into joining a class for strength training but doing simple things at home can be beneficial. Strength training can also help you not to gain weight. Flexibility exercises or stretching help you to maintain good range of motion.

Use gentle stretching exercises before doing more vigorous types of activity such as brisk walking, swimming, bicycling or jogging. Flexibility can help in preventing injury and muscle soreness.

How to Stay Motivated

Keeping up with an exercise or activity program can be difficult. There always seems to be something that gets in the way. Think about the things that may be stopping you from being active. Here are a few tips to help you stick with it and have fun:

- Pick an activity you enjoy
- Ask a friend to join you
- Start slow and work up, you don't have to do it all at once
- Do different activities on different days so that you don't get bored
- Walk indoors at a local school or mall if conditions aren't right for outdoor walking
- Be realistic! Set small goals and reward yourself when you reach them
- Share your successes with family and friends

Some examples of aerobic activities:

- A brisk walk
- Swimming
- Raking leaves
- Bicycling
- Dancing
- Water aerobics

Everyday activities that count:

- Housework and gardening
- Using the stairs instead of elevator
- Parking further away in the lot
- Playing with the children/grandchildren

Tips

- Talk to your health care provider about what type of activity is safe and right for you.
- Learn how your body responds to increased activity and check your blood glucose more frequently when you are active. Always check before and after exercise.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise to avoid dehydration.
- Know if you are at an increased risk for low blood glucose and be prepared to treat it, if necessary. Carry a source of carbohydrates with you at all times.
- Wear a medical alert identification in case of an emergency.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes and don't forget to check your feet every day.
- If you have type 1 diabetes and your blood glucose is elevated, check your urine for ketones. If ketones are present, postpone vigorous physical activity until ketones are negative.
- If you take insulin or certain oral medicines for your diabetes, physical activity may increase your risk of low blood glucose (hypoglycemia). Check your blood glucose before exercise and if it is below 100 mg/dl, you should have some added carbohydrate before you begin.
- Most importantly, don't be too hard on yourself, tomorrow is another day. Try not to lose sight of the big picture and give yourself credit for all the steps you are taking to reach your ultimate goal.

Remember

