

**PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY**



**FOR
PEOPLE
WITH
DIABETES**



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Because health matters

WHY IT'S GOOD TO GET GOING.

When you add regular physical activity to your meal plan and medications, you'll be doing more to help control your blood sugar levels. And that means you may be less likely to develop some of the complications of diabetes. Here's what exercise can do for you:

- **Lower your blood sugar levels.** Sugar is stored in muscles. When you exercise, your muscles work harder, and as they work, they use the stored sugar. As the sugar stored in muscles runs low, sugar is “pulled” from the blood to be used as energy.
- **Help your body use insulin more efficiently.** Your muscles and other tissues use insulin more easily when you exercise. With physical activity, less insulin is needed to move sugar out of the blood and into muscle cells.
- **Improve your overall health.** Regular physical activity has been shown to help protect against heart disease and stroke. It's also a great way to reduce stress and help manage your weight.

THE CIRCLE OF BETTER BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL.

You are at the center of a successful plan to improve your blood sugar control with more physical activity. Everything you need to manage your diabetes comes from within you.



MAKE THE FIRST MOVE WISELY.

Before starting any exercise program, it's always smart to talk to your healthcare provider first and get a checkup. By working together, you can:

- Make any necessary changes in diet.
- Determine your current fitness level.
- Set realistic goals for the future.
- Monitor blood sugar levels.



Be smart and play it safe.

Always ask your healthcare team about ways to make sure exercise is safe for you. Let your doctor or other team members know if you're planning to start, stop or increase physical activity. And please, always wear diabetes identification when exercising.

- Don't overdo it. Always exercise at moderate intensity and use the talk test—you should be able to talk while exercising and not be out of breath.
- Stop immediately if you do not feel well or have pain.
- Make sure you drink enough fluid during exercise.
- Carry food containing glucose with you in case your blood sugar drops.

You've already got what it takes.

For people with diabetes, even a little bit of physical activity can go a long way toward improving your health. Here are some everyday ways to make exercise easier:

- Forget the TV remote—get up to change the channel.
- Put the phone farther away from where you sit.
- Increase the amount you pull, push and lift.
- Carry your own groceries and packages.
- Don't sit still for too long—stand up and move.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.



WALK WHENEVER YOU CAN.

Walking is one of the best ways to get in shape, and it's simple to do throughout the day. Here are some ideas:

- Go for a walk every day with your dog or a friend.
- Do your errands on foot instead of by car.
- Walk to the watercooler instead of keeping water at your desk.
- Buy movie tickets early and walk until showtime.
- Run out for coffee or to put money in the parking meter.
- Wear a pedometer to track your steps. You may be surprised at how far you're going.

Put together a plan.

The ideal exercise plan should include three types of activities:

- **Flexibility exercises**—The best routines begin with stretching. Check out yoga or t'ai chi. They'll warm up your muscles and keep you limber.
- **Aerobics**—This includes anything that gets your heart going. Try walking, biking, ice-skating, even dancing. One of the best options is swimming—it not only makes you feel lighter, it also takes pressure off your joints. Just remember to start out slowly. That way, you can get in shape at a pace you find comfortable.
- **Strength training**—Whether you lift light weights or use elastic bands, you'll find strength training boosts your energy and helps you burn more calories.

Stay on the level.

Sometimes physical activity can make your blood sugar drop too much, resulting in hypoglycemia. That's why it's important to test your blood sugar level before you exercise and then again several hours later. By doing this regularly, you'll be able to see just how much exercise lowers your blood sugar. If it goes too low, your healthcare team can help you find ways to reduce your risk—from changing your insulin dose to making sure you always carry something to eat that contains glucose.

Here are two ways to monitor your blood sugar:

- **Self-monitoring.** Also called home-monitoring, this type of testing uses a blood glucose meter to instantly measure your blood sugar at home.
- **A1C testing.** This test is done by your healthcare provider. It gives you your average blood sugar level over the past two to three months. According to the American Diabetes Association, your blood sugar level is in control if your A1C is under 7%. Be sure you understand the goal your healthcare provider has set for you.

Eat a healthy diet.

Once you increase your level of physical activity, you may find you need to adjust your diet. People who exercise use more energy than people who don't. So make sure your meal plan includes lots of healthy choices. For more tips, ask your healthcare professional for a copy of the Meal Planning guide—part of our ongoing series of publications for people with diabetes.



KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU DO.

One of the simplest ways to stay motivated is to keep track of your daily activities. To monitor your progress, use this chart—or create a chart that’s customized to the activities you enjoy most. Just remember to start out slowly, have fun, and keep on going!

**NUMBER OF
MINUTES SPENT:**

WALKING
YARD WORK
PLAYING SPORTS
OTHER

Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

SEE WHAT YOU CAN BURN IN JUST 20 MINUTES.

Activity	Total Calories*
Gardening	109
Washing the Car	82
Walking the Dog	82
Pushing a Stroller	68
Bicycling	163
Aerobic Dance	136
Roller Skating	191
Jogging	191

**Based on 180-pound person*

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIVING HEALTHY WITH DIABETES

There are plenty of online resources for people with diabetes. Visit these sites for lists of local dietitians, diabetes educators, and support groups. You'll find many of these sites contain advice on healthy ways to incorporate more physical activity into your life.

American Council for Fitness and Nutrition
www.acfn.org

American Diabetes Association
(ADA)
www.diabetes.org

American Association of Diabetes Educators
(AADE)
www.aadenet.org

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
(AACE)
www.aace.com

National Diabetes Education Program
www.ndep.nih.gov

dLife
www.dlife.com

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