

# Physical Activity & Diabetes

## What can a physically active lifestyle do for me?

Research has shown that physical activity can:

- lower your blood glucose and your blood pressure
- lower your bad cholesterol and raise your good cholesterol
- improve your body's ability to use insulin
- lower your risk for heart disease and stroke
- keep your heart and bones strong
- keep your joints flexible
- lower your risk of falling
- help you lose weight
- reduce your body fat
- give you more energy
- reduce your stress levels



## Be extra active every day...

Being extra active can increase the number of calories you burn. Try these ways to be extra active, or think of other things you can do.

- Walk around while you talk on the phone.
- Play with the kids.
- Take the dog for a walk.
- Get up to change the TV channel instead of using the remote control.
- Work in the garden or rake leaves.
- Clean the house.
- Wash the car.
- Stretch out your chores. For example, make two trips to take the laundry downstairs instead of one.
- Park at the far end of the shopping center parking lot and walk to the store.
- At the grocery store, walk down every aisle.
- At work, walk over to see a co-worker instead of calling or emailing.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Stretch or walk around instead of taking a coffee break and eating.
- During your lunch break, walk to the post office or do other errands.
- Other things I can do: \_\_\_\_\_

## Do aerobic exercise...

Aerobic exercise is activity that requires the use of large muscles and makes your heart beat faster. You will also breathe harder during aerobic exercise. Doing aerobic exercise for 30 minutes a day at least 5 days a week provides many benefits. You can even split up those 30 minutes into several parts. For example, you can take three brisk 10-minute walks, one after each meal.

If you haven't exercised lately, see your doctor first to make sure it's okay for you to increase your level of physical activity. Talk with your doctor about how to warm up and stretch before you exercise and how to cool down after you exercise. Then start slowly with 5 to 10 minutes a day. Add a little more time each week, aiming for at least 150 minutes per week. Try:

- walking briskly
- hiking
- climbing stairs
- swimming or taking a water-aerobics class
- dancing
- riding a bicycle outdoors or a stationary bicycle indoors
- taking an aerobics class
- playing basketball, volleyball, or other sports
- in-line skating, ice skating, or skate boarding
- playing tennis
- cross-country skiing
- other things I can do: \_\_\_\_\_



## Stretch...

Stretching increases your flexibility, lowers stress, and helps prevent muscle soreness after other types of exercise. Your health care team can tell you what kind of stretching is best for you.

## Do strength training...

Doing exercises with hand weights, elastic bands, or weight machines three times a week builds muscle. When you have more muscle and less fat, you'll burn more calories because muscle burns more calories than fat, even between exercise sessions. Strength training can help make daily chores easier, improving your balance and coordination, as well as your bones' health. You can do strength training at home, at a fitness center, or in a class. Your health care team can tell you more about strength training and what kind is best for you.



## Decide exactly what you'll do and set some goals.

Choose:

- the type of physical activity you want to do
- the clothes and items you'll need to get ready
- the days and times you'll add activity
- the length of each session
- your plan for warming up, stretching, and cooling down for each session
- a backup plan, such as where you'll walk if the weather is bad
- your measures of progress

**Find an exercise buddy.** Many people find they are more likely to do something active if a friend joins them. If you and a friend plan to walk together, for example, you may be more likely to do it.

**Keep track of your physical activity.** Write down when you exercise and for how long in your blood glucose record book. You'll be able to track your progress and see how physical activity affects your blood glucose.

**Decide how you'll reward yourself.** Do something nice for yourself when you reach your activity goals. For example, treat yourself to a movie or buy a new plant for the garden.

## Are there any types of physical activity I shouldn't do?

If you have diabetes complications, some kinds of exercise can make your problems worse. For example, activities that increase the pressure in the blood vessels of your eyes, such as lifting heavy weights, can make diabetic eye problems worse. If nerve damage from diabetes has made your feet numb, your doctor may suggest that you try swimming instead of walking for aerobic exercise.

When you have numb feet, you might not feel pain in your feet. Sores or blisters might get worse because you don't notice them. Without proper care, minor foot problems can turn into serious conditions, sometimes leading to amputation. Make sure you exercise in cotton socks and comfortable, well-fitting shoes designed for the activity you are doing. After you exercise, check your feet for cuts, sores, bumps, or redness. Call your doctor if any foot problems develop.

## What should I do before I start a physical activity program?

**Check with your doctor.** Always talk with your doctor before you start a new physical activity program. Ask about your medicines -- prescription and over-the-counter -- and whether you should change the amount you take before you exercise. If you have heart disease, kidney disease, eye problems, or foot problems, ask which types of physical activity are safe for you.

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