

## Physical Activity and Diabetes

A physically active lifestyle is important for everyone, especially for people with diabetes. Research has shown that physical activity may help people with diabetes, and may play a role in preventing type 2 diabetes.

### Exercise Benefits for People with Diabetes

There are many exercise benefits for people with diabetes. These benefits can include:

- Lower blood glucose levels
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower LDL "bad" cholesterol and higher HDL "good" cholesterol levels
- The body's improved ability to use insulin
- Reduced risk for heart disease and stroke
- Weight loss
- Increased energy
- Stress reduction

### Before You Begin an Exercise Program

Check with your doctor. Always talk to your doctor before you start a new physical activity program. Consider your daily schedule, your meal plan and your diabetes medications in deciding when to exercise. If you take insulin, ask your health care team whether you should change your dosage before you begin your exercise program.

Ask your doctor which types of physical activity are safe for you. For people with complications from diabetes including heart disease, kidney disease, eye problems or foot problems, exercise often worsen these conditions. For example, your doctor may suggest you try swimming instead of walking for aerobic exercise if nerve damage from diabetes has made your feet numb.

Check your blood glucose. The primary concern for a diabetic who is exercising is the risk of hypoglycemia (low blood glucose or hyperglycemia (high blood glucose). Check your blood glucose levels before you exercise. If your blood glucose is above 300, refrain from exercising until your blood glucose is lower. Exercise is also not recommended if your fasting blood glucose is above 250 and you have ketones in your urine. If your blood glucose is below 100, it is important to eat a snack before you exercise.

### During Exercise

- Wear your medical identification or other ID.
- Always carry food or glucose tablets so that you will be ready to treat hypoglycemia.

- Check your blood glucose at regular intervals if you will be exercising for over an hour. You may need snacks before you finish.

## After Exercise

- Check to see how exercise affected your blood glucose level.
- Check your feet for cuts, sores, bumps or redness. Call your doctor if any foot problems develop.
- Keep track of your physical activity. Write down when you exercised and for how long.

## Resources

- American Diabetes Association: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health: [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov)

Some information on this page was collected from documents found on the website for the National Diabetes Information Clearing House (NDIC), a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov).

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