

Getting More Active—for People With Diabetes

How Activity Helps

Activity does many good things for us:

- It makes us more sensitive to insulin.
- It makes us leaner.
- It strengthens our hearts.
- It makes us stronger and produces better balance.
- It makes us stay young longer.
- It helps relieve stress.

How To Add Activity

Many people think that only strenuous activity is helpful, but that is not true. Just being more active can make a difference. Some things you can do are:

- Gardening
- Walking a dog
- Playing with children
- Walking to do errands
- Raking the lawn
- Taking the stairs

List other ways you can be more active: _____

Beginning an Exercise Program

- Before beginning a formal exercise program, talk to your doctor. The doctor may want to give you a physical before you begin. Then choose an activity you like.
- Begin with a 5- to 10-minutes session.
- Slowly work up to your goal. Usually, 30–45 minutes of aerobic activity is enough. For best results, do it 5 or more days a week. The minimum is 3 days a week.

- Schedule your exercise time on your calendar. Your blood glucose level will be more predictable if you exercise at about the same time each day.
- Do different exercises, so you will not get bored.
- Exercise with a partner.

Exercising Safely

- Make sure your exercise partners know you have diabetes, in case you need help.
- Check your blood sugar before, during, and after you exercise, especially if you take diabetes medicine. You may need a snack if your blood sugar is too low.
- Do not exercise if your blood glucose is less than 80 or over 300. Get back in control first.
- Carry with you a snack of quick-acting carbohydrate or glucose tabs, if you take diabetes medicine.
- If you are trying to lose weight or if you regularly exercise at the same time each day, you may be able to reduce your diabetes medicine. Keep good blood glucose records and talk with your doctor before making any changes.
- Wear *visible* diabetes identification—a bracelet or necklace.

Snacking

If you need a snack before, during, or after exercise, here are some suggestions that contain 15 grams of carbohydrate. You may need more than 15 grams depending on how low your blood sugar is or how long you exercise.

- 6 saltines
- 4 ounces of juice
- 3 graham crackers
- 1 cup skim or low-fat milk
- 1 small piece of fruit
- 1 cup plain or artificially sweetened yogurt
- 2 tablespoons raisins

If you have a low blood sugar reaction, treat yourself with 15 grams of quick-acting carbohydrate. Then wait 15 minutes. Test your blood sugar, and if it is still low, re-treat with 15 more grams.

Quick-acting carbohydrate foods that you can carry include:

- Glucose tablets or gel
- 1 tablespoon honey or syrup
- 1/2 cup juice
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1/3 can regular soft drink with sugar
- 4 teaspoons sugar

Always carry emergency phone numbers and money.

If you are more active than usual and take diabetes medicine, test your blood glucose afterward more often. You are more at risk for a low blood sugar reaction for up to 12–24 hours.

Answer These Questions:

1. Do I want to start a regular exercise program? Yes/No
2. What exercises do I think I can do and would I enjoy? _____

3. When can I schedule an appointment to talk with my doctor about this? _____

4. With whom can I exercise? _____

5. What do I need to do before I start? _____

6. What are my exercise goals? _____
How long? _____
How often? _____
Blood glucose range before? _____
Blood glucose range after? _____