

Living Well with Diabetes

Be Physically Active Every Day!

Physical activity helps keep our heart, muscles, bones, and joints healthy. Regular physical activity helps prevent and manage diabetes, high blood pressure, excess weight gain, heart disease, and some types of cancer. Physical activity also lowers the risk of depression and anxiety and improves our sense of well-being and self-esteem.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week. Even more health benefits are gained from more physical activity at higher intensities.

Physical Activity for People with Diabetes

People with diabetes who are physically active should always carry a light snack such as three graham crackers, six saltines, six Life Savers, a small box of raisins, or two to three glucose tablets. Carry this light snack in your pocket to use in case your blood sugar gets too low.

Physical activity usually lowers blood glucose. Be sure to check your blood glucose before doing an activity. If your measurements are low, then you may want to eat a small snack, such as a piece of fruit, a glass of milk or a few crackers. If your blood glucose is 300 or more, then you may want to wait because activity can also increase blood

sugar in some people (such as those with type 1 diabetes). So, talk with your health care provider about physical activity when your blood sugar is high.

Get and wear a diabetes I.D. bracelet to wear if you do not already own one. Make sure it is visible so a person wanting to help you will find it easily. Those worn on the wrist or neck are usually more visible. A wallet card is not visible. You may also want to have an exercise partner. This makes physical activity more enjoyable and safer.

People with diabetes need to pay very close attention to their feet and check them daily. If you cannot check your feet easily, then get someone to look for you. Some people also tape a mirror at a 45 degree angle to a long stick so they can see under their feet. When being physically active, you may easily develop blisters or other injuries on your feet. Buy shoes that fit well and check your feet daily. If you don't check your feet, then you may not even notice the injuries. In cases such as this, swimming may be a better activity to allow your feet time to heal.

Always drink lots of water to avoid getting dehydrated. Dehydration can cause problems and make you feel sick. If you start to feel weak or dizzy while doing an activity, stop doing it and wait until you feel better.

Tips for fitting physical activity into your day

- Do housework to music.
- Take the dog for a walk.
- Work in the garden or flowerbed.
- Pace the floor while talking on the phone.
- Make several trips to and from the car while unloading groceries.
- Break up sitting time with movement, such as foot tapping, swinging legs up and down, circling the ankles, or raising and lowering arms.
- Take walks in the neighborhood.
- Take exercise breaks during TV commercials. Stand up and march in place, stretch, walk around the room, and walk to the kitchen for a glass of water.
- Join the exercise and stretching class in your community.
- Find a walking buddy and sign up for local “walk-a-thons” or charity walks.
- Park the car in one spot and walk to do many errands.
- Try an active hobby such as bicycling, walking trails, dancing, taking a yoga class, swimming, or water aerobics.