

Diabetes and Exercise

Activity can help you control your weight, get stronger, and feel healthy. It also helps lower your risk of heart disease. Being active doesn't mean you have to exercise in a gym. Many everyday chores and tasks help you stay active. Your healthcare team can help you find ways to increase your activity and exercise safely.

Planning to get active

Talk to your doctor before starting an activity program. You may need to have a checkup before you start.

Getting started

Your first goal is to increase your activity slowly. Try to find ways to include some activity in your daily routine. Here are some tips:

- Do outdoor chores, such as yard work or gardening.
- Take a 10-minute walk.
- Walk up a flight of stairs instead of taking the elevator.
- Park your car in the space farthest from where you're going.

Changing the pace

When you're ready, start increasing the pace of your routine. Choose any nonstop activity that makes your heart and lungs work harder than normal. These activities are called aerobic exercise. They include brisk walking, jogging, swimming, and bicycling.

Exercising safely

When you have diabetes, you have to balance your activity with food and insulin. A few easy steps can help you keep your blood sugar in your target ranges during activity.

Activity and blood sugar

Here are some tips to help manage your blood sugar when being active:

- Deliver (inject) your insulin into areas of the body you won't be using when you exercise.
- Eat a snack before you exercise.
- Ask your doctor when you should check your blood sugar and which ranges make exercise unsafe. Also ask when you should check your urine or blood for ketones
- Carry snacks and fast-acting sugar, such as glucose tablets or fruit juice.

- Check your blood sugar if you start feeling faint. If your blood sugar is low, take 15 to 20 grams of fast-acting sugar. That's 4 to 5 glucose tablets or 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of fruit juice. Wait 15 minutes, then test your blood sugar again. If it hasn't gone up, take another 15 to 20 grams of fast-acting sugar. If it's still too low, call your doctor or go to the emergency room. If your sugar is normal, eat a small meal.
- Do any resistance exercises before aerobic exercise. Resistance exercises include lifting weights and using exercise bands. This reduces your risk for hypoglycemia.

Safety tips

Here are some tips to help you stay safe while being active:

- Wear ID, such as a bracelet or necklace that says you have diabetes, in case of emergency.
- Exercise with a partner.
- Warm up before you exercise and cool down afterward. You can do this by walking and stretching. Your healthcare team can show you how.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Don't exercise when you are sick or if you have ketones in your blood or urine.