

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND TYPE 2 DIABETES

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- Regular, moderate physical activity prevents against many health conditions, reduces symptoms and improves the long-term outlook for your health and life. This is particularly true for Type 2 diabetes.
- Physical activity is the cornerstone for both preventing and managing Type 2 diabetes.
- If you don't have Type 2 diabetes you can prevent your chance of getting it by up to 50% by staying physically active.
- If you have Type 2 diabetes staying active will almost certainly help you manage your diabetes effectively and stay well and healthy.
- Aim for 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. Examples are brisk walking, swimming, cycling and mowing the lawns.
- You will get similar benefits if you break your 30 minutes into more manageable chunks, like 10 minute intervals.
- In most cases vigorous physical activity can produce greater benefits.
- The key to getting the benefits of physical activity is to stick at it over time. You will gain far more health benefits if you have regular moderate amounts of exercise every day, than if you exercise for longer on only one or two days of the week.

If you are not yet physically active it is important that you start safely. If you are an older person, or you've had diabetes for more than five years, or have any existing complications of diabetes (e.g. eye, foot, heart or kidney conditions), please visit your doctor before you start. Your doctor can help you plan an activity that is safe for you.

WHAT STAYING ACTIVE DOES FOR YOU

Physical activity (or exercise) can help you:

- Increase your energy
- Control your weight
- Reduce the risk of you developing Type 2 diabetes
- Lower your blood pressure
- Keep your heart healthy
- Strengthen your muscles and bones
- Lower your blood glucose levels
- Expand your lung capacity
- Improve your circulation
- Make you feel happier (it releases endorphins, the 'happy hormones')
- Help you to sleep better
- Help you live longer
- Improve your sex life

Most importantly, introducing physical activity into your day will help you control your weight. While diet helps to reduce weight, studies have shown that physical activity keeps it off!

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WHAT SORT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS BEST?

Aerobic exercise is the most beneficial. This means exercise that uses oxygen. You know if you are exercising aerobically because you will have to breathe harder than when you are resting. Your breathing should still be comfortable though.

Examples of aerobic exercise are:

- Brisk walking
- Mowing the lawns
- Doing the vacuum cleaning
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Playing ball games
- Aerobic exercise or dance classes
- Washing the car

TIPS FOR EXERCISING SAFELY IF YOU ARE ON INSULIN OR SOME OF THE PILLS THAT LOWER YOUR BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS (THE 'SULPHONYLUREA' GROUP OF PILLS)

- When you exercise you are more prone to low blood glucose levels. Ask your doctor, or diabetes team about "hypos" or low blood glucose from your diabetes team.
- The main reason for hypos during and after physical activity is because your blood glucose falls faster than your body can replace the glucose in your blood used by your muscles in exercise. Once you have stopped activity your body will need to replace the stores of glucose, which may result in your blood levels dropping further.
- Exercise also makes your whole body more sensitive to the action of insulin. This is a good thing, but you may need to adjust your medication (downwards) once you are exercising regularly.
- If your blood glucose is often going low, or you are feeling like you are having to eat just to keep your blood glucose up, see your doctor or diabetes nurse. They can help you readjust your medication.
- Most importantly, monitor your glucose levels before, during and after physical activity. Drink lots of water too.

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