

## Be More Active

Along with healthy eating, being active can help manage diabetes.

Being active can lower your:

- blood glucose (sugar)
- blood pressure
- cholesterol

It also:

- lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke
- relieves stress
- makes your heart, muscles, and bones strong
- helps insulin work better
- improves your blood flow
- keeps your joints flexible

### What kinds of physical activity should be part of my routine?

You should include three kinds of activities:

- aerobic exercise
- being active throughout the day
- strength training

### Real-Life Stories from People with Diabetes

These people chose to add physical activity to their daily routine. Here's why:

*Darlene S.:* My little girl wanted me to walk with her to the playground. When I told her I couldn't walk that far, she said we should start walking a little each day so I'll be healthy and live a long time.

*Charlie M.:* After my heart attack, I started walking almost every day but I didn't keep it up. I remember how great I felt—I had lots of energy. I'd like to get back into that routine so I can feel that great again.

*Rosita S.:* The day I couldn't fit into my size 14 pants, I said to myself, "That's it! It's time for me to lose weight."

*Sadie F.:* I want to set a good example for my grandson so he won't get diabetes. He's only 9 but he's already heavy and the kids make fun of him. Maybe we can go for walks together.

How about you? Do you have a reason to become more active? Write it here:

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## Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise is activity that gets your heart rate up and helps your body use oxygen better. For most people, it's best to aim for a total of about 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week of aerobic activity. If you are trying to lose weight, you may need to do at least 60 minutes a day.

If you haven't been very active recently, start out with 5 or 10 minutes a day. Work up to more time each week. Or split up your activity for the day. Try a brisk 10-minute walk after each meal. Make it fit your schedule. Check what you'd like to try:

- take a brisk walk
- go dancing
- take an exercise class
- go swimming or do water aerobics
- ride a bike
- play basketball or soccer

What are some other ways you could get aerobic exercise?

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## Being active throughout the day

In addition to formal exercise, there are many ways to be active throughout the day. Being active helps burn calories. If you sit all day, think of ways to move more. Place a check mark next to things you'd like to try:

### If You Sit At Work

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk during your lunch break
- Get up once an hour and take a quick walk
- Stand up and stretch often
- If you take the bus, get off a stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Use a speaker or cell phone so you can pace around when on the phone
- Try some chair exercises

### At Home

- Take the dog for a walk
- Do yard work such as gardening, mowing the lawn or raking leaves
- Do housework such as vacuuming, dusting, or washing dishes
- Play catch or throw a Frisbee with your kids or grandkids
- Walk in place during the commercials of your favorite television show
- Carry things upstairs or from the car in two trips instead of one
- Walk around the house or up and down stairs while you talk on the phone

## While You're Out and About

- Walk instead of drive, if you can
- Park farther away from the store and walk
- When on a car trip, stop every few hours to stretch and walk around

What are some other ways you could be active during the day?

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## Strength training

Do strength training 2 to 3 times a week. It helps build strong bones and muscles. This makes everyday chores like carrying groceries easier for you. Strength training can also help to prevent weight gain. Here are some ways to do it:

- Lift light weights at home.
- Use an exercise video that shows you how to use canned foods to lift weights.
- Join a class that uses weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes.

What are some ways you could do strength training?

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## What should I do to get started?

These steps will help you get ready for a routine that's safe and fun.

- **Talk to your health care team about what is safe for you.**
- **Choose what you'll do and make a plan.**

Think about what activities you think you can do. Start slowly. Write down exactly what you'll do, where and when you'll do it, how often, and for how long. Plan how you'll reward yourself for your efforts. For example, some people treat themselves to a movie when they meet their goal for the week.
- **Learn your blood glucose response to exercise.**

Everyone's blood glucose response to exercise is different. Checking your blood glucose before and after exercise can show you the benefits of activity. You also can use the results of your blood glucose checks to prevent low blood glucose or high blood glucose.
- **Learn how to avoid low blood glucose or hypoglycemia.**

Keep in mind that low blood glucose can occur during or after physical activity. Low blood glucose is most likely if you:

  - take insulin or certain diabetes pills
  - skip a meal
  - exercise for longer than usual
  - do strenuous exercise

If you often have trouble with low blood glucose when you are active, eat a snack before exercise. Talk to your health care team about what you can do. You may need a change in your medicine.

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If your blood glucose is high before you exercise (above 300 mg/dl), physical activity can make it go even higher. So be cautious about doing something active.

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### Treating Low Blood Glucose

During activity, check your blood glucose if you are hungry, nervous, shaky, or sweating. If your blood glucose is 70 mg/dl or below, have 4 to 6 glucose tablets. You can also have 1/2 cup (4 ounces) of fruit juice or regular soft drink to raise your blood glucose. After 15 minutes, check your blood glucose again. If it's still below 70, have another serving and repeat these steps until your blood glucose is at least 70.

### Safety Tips

- **Plan to have water and snacks handy during activity.**

Drink plenty of water before, during, and after activity. If you are at risk for low blood glucose, always carry a source of carbohydrate so you'll be ready to treat low blood glucose.

- **Wear a medical identification bracelet, necklace, or a medical ID tag to protect yourself in case of emergency.**
- **Wear shoes that fit well and socks that do not irritate your feet.**
- **Decide how you'll keep track of your progress.**  
You may find it helpful to write down what physical activity you've done each day. You can write it in your journal. For example, you can make a note of what you did and how long you did it. Some people enjoy using a step counter, also called a pedometer, to see how far they've walked.

### What keeps you from being active?

If you're not active, it's likely that you have at least one reason why. Perhaps you've never been very active. Maybe you're afraid you'll get low blood glucose. Think about what's keeping you from being active. Then look into ways to overcome the barriers.

### Barriers

### Solutions

• I don't have time to exercise for 30 minutes a day.	Do as much as you can. Every step counts. If you're just starting out, do 10 minutes a day and add more little by little. Work up to 10 minutes at a time, three times a day.
• I'm too tired after work.	Plan to do something before work or during the day.
• I don't have the right clothes.	Wear anything that's comfortable as long as you have shoes that fit well and socks that don't irritate your skin.
• I'm too shy to exercise in a group.	Choose something you can do on your own. Try to follow along with an aerobics class on TV. Or, go for a walk.

## Barriers

## Solutions

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|---|--|
| • I don't want to have sore muscles.                        | Exercise shouldn't hurt if you go slowly at first. Choose something you can do without getting sore. Learn how to warm up and stretch before you do something active and how to cool down afterward. |
| • I'm afraid I'll get low blood glucose.                    | If you're taking a medicine that could cause low blood glucose, talk to your health care provider about ways to exercise safely.   |
| • Walking hurts my knees.                                   | Try chair exercises or swimming.   |
| • It's too hot outside.                                     | If it's too hot, too cold, or too humid, walk inside a shopping center.  |
| • It's not safe to walk where I live.                       | Find an indoor activity, such as an exercise class at a community center.  |
| • I'm afraid I'll make my condition worse.                  | Get a checkup before you get started. Learn what's safe for you to do.   |
| • I can't afford to join a fitness center or buy equipment. | Do something that doesn't require fancy equipment, such as walking or using cans of food for weights.  |
| • Exercise is boring.                                       | Find something you enjoy doing. Try different activities on different days.  |
| • What are <b>your</b> barriers?                            | What are some solutions?   |

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- **Be flexible with your plan.**

For example, you could plan to get off the bus one stop earlier. Don't be too hard on yourself if you can't. For example, if it's raining, you may not want to walk outside. On those days, choose something else. It's more important to reach your long-term goal than to follow the plan from day to day.

Finding time to be active takes planning. You can do it. The rewards are big! If you need help getting started, talk to your health care team.