

Being Active When You Have Diabetes

Physical activity is very important for people with diabetes because it helps control blood sugar and body weight. Being active is also good for your mind and mood.

What are the benefits of physical activity?

There are many benefits of being active! Here are just a few:

- Helps you manage your blood sugar levels
- Keeps your heart healthy
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers "bad" cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides
- Raises "good" cholesterol (HDL)
- Helps with weight loss and weight maintenance
- Gives you more energy
- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Helps you sleep

What is the best way to be active?

The best activities are those you enjoy and that fit into your schedule! Look at your daily routine and see if you can make changes to increase your activity:

- Park farther away from your destination and walk.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Walk or ride a bike on local errands.
- Be more active at your home—even chores like house-cleaning, gardening, or washing the car can help you move.

As with any new activity or skill, it takes time and determination to develop an exercise program and to have confidence that you can do it safely and correctly. The hardest part is taking the first steps.

What should I do before I start increasing my activity?

- Talk with your healthcare provider about your plans for being more active, especially if you have not been active recently
- Learn how to prevent low blood sugar reactions if you are on a medication that can cause low blood sugar.
- Check your blood sugar a few times before and after physical activity, to make sure it does not drop too low.
- Carry a snack.
- If you are on insulin, wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace.
- Drink plenty of water.

- Wear comfortable shoes and socks.

How much activity do I need?

Aim to be active for a minimum of 35 minutes at least 5 days a week:

- Take 10-minute walks around your home or office, 3 times a day.
- Use a pedometer to track your steps; aim to get 10,000 steps a day.

How do I start a walking program?

Walking is a great place to start. Most people can benefit from walking as their main form of physical activity.

- Wear socks and shoes that are comfortable for walking.
- Begin by walking 5 minutes a day for a week, and then add 2-5 minutes each week.
- Walk in 3 stages:
 1. Warm up by walking slowly for about 5 minutes
 2. Walk at a brisk pace for the time you have allotted
 3. Finish with 5 minutes of slow walking to cool down
- When you are able to walk for 30 minutes, try picking up the pace, or doing short bursts of faster walking ("intervals"), to improve your fitness.
- Walk as if you are late for a meeting, not just out taking a stroll!

Patient Care Advice (PCOI) documents are available under **Resources** on your Patient Gateway home page.

This document is not a substitute for your care team's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.

© 2021 The General Hospital Corporation. Primary Care Office InSite