

Physical activity and diabetes

What kind of activity is best?

Both aerobic and resistance exercise are important for people living with diabetes.

Aerobic exercises

Aerobic exercise is continuous exercise such as walking, bicycling or jogging that elevates breathing and heart rate.

Resistance exercises

Resistance exercise involves brief repetitive exercises with weights, weight machines, resistance bands or one's own body weight to build muscle strength. If you decide to begin resistance exercise, you should first get some instruction from a qualified exercise specialist, a diabetes educator or exercise resource (such as a video or brochure) and start slowly.

Why is activity so important for people with diabetes?

Almost everyone, whether or not they have diabetes, benefits from regular exercise. Well-known health benefits include weight loss, stronger bones, improved blood pressure control, lower rates of heart disease and cancer as well as increased energy levels.

Regular exercise also has special advantages if you have type 2 diabetes. Regular physical activity improves your body's sensitivity to insulin and helps manage your blood glucose levels.

Safety first

- If you have been inactive for some time, talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program that is more strenuous than brisk walking.
- Make sure you wear comfortable, proper-fitting shoes.
- Wear your MedicAlert® bracelet or necklace.
- Listen to your body. Speak to your doctor if you are very short of breath or have chest pain.
- If you take insulin or medications that increase insulin levels, monitor your blood glucose before, during and many hours after your activity to see how it affects your blood glucose levels.
- Carry some form of fast-acting carbohydrate with you in case you need to treat low blood glucose (hypoglycemia), for example, glucose tablets (preferred) or Life Savers®.



My plan for aerobic exercise is :

Minutes

times per week

My plan for resistance exercise is :

times per week



How much is enough?

Your goal should be to complete at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week, (e.g. 30 minutes, 5 days a week).

You may have to start slowly, with as little as 5 to 10 minutes of exercise per day, gradually building up to your goal. The good news, though, is that multiple, shorter exercise sessions of at least 10 minutes each are probably as useful as a single longer session of the same intensity.

If you are able and when you are ready, try adding resistance exercises like lifting weights 3 times a week.



Keep going!

Habits can be hard to change, so be prepared with a plan in case your motivation starts to fade:

- Do something you like! It is hard to stick to an activity that is not fun. It may take you a few tries before you find the activity that is right for you.
- Have a support network. Ask your family, friends and co-workers to help you stay motivated by joining you for a walk or a workout at the gym.
- Set small, attainable goals and celebrate when you reach them. Reward yourself in healthy ways.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Seek professional help from a personal trainer, or someone knowledgeable who can help you find a fitness regimen that will work for you.

Physical activity and diabetes can be a complex issue. For more information, talk to your healthcare team or visit diabetes.ca.

Regardless of your age, making the decision to become more physically active is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and the people who love you. Take that first step today!

Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. Our community-based network of supporters help us provide education and services to people living with diabetes, advocate for our cause, break ground towards a cure and translate research into practical applications.

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