

Safety first

If you have been inactive for some time, talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program that is more strenuous than a brisk walk.

- Be sure to start low and slow.
- Wear comfortable, proper-fitting shoes.
- Wear your MedicAlert® bracelet or necklace.
- Stop the activity and speak to your doctor if you are short of breath or have chest pain.
- Exercise can lower your blood sugar for up to 48 hours. It's important to monitor your blood sugar regularly, especially if you are taking insulin or other medications that lower your blood sugar.
- Carry fast-acting carbohydrate like candy or glucose tabs in case you need to treat low blood sugar.

Physical activity comes in many forms. You can obtain health benefits from simply moving your body. Try:

- Taking the stairs
- Dancing
- Working in the garden
- Playing with your kids
- Mowing your lawn
- Walking (or using your wheelchair) around the mall.
- Cleaning and dusting

Almost everyone, whether they have diabetes or not, benefits from regular physical activity. In addition to other health benefits, physical activity helps with blood sugar control.

Benefits of physical activity

Well-known health benefits include:

- Maintenance of body weight and muscle mass
- Stronger bones
- Improved blood pressure control
- Lower rates of heart disease and cancer
- Increased energy levels
- Decreased stress
- Improved relaxation and sleep

For those living with diabetes, regular physical activity also improves your body's sensitivity to insulin and helps manage your blood sugar levels.

Getting started

Being physically active does not have to start with a formal exercise program or even going to the gym. There are lots of things you can do to get moving that will have a positive impact on your health.

Some tips to get started:

- Choose activities you enjoy.
- Make it a priority and put it in your daily calendar.
- Divide it out throughout the day into smaller time blocks.
- Set a small daily or weekly goal and add a little more when you are able.
- Move your body in ways that feel good and are comfortable.



Ways to increase physical activity

Small changes can add up to big benefits. Start small and build up to the recommended amounts slowly. The key is to just move more. Some things to try:

- Add some movement after each meal or between meetings.
- If able, take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Avoid sitting still for long periods.
- Look for a group activity that you would enjoy, like a cycling, bowling, dancing or a walking club.
- Park your car further from your destination or get off transit one stop early.

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!

Types of exercise

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

Aerobic exercises

Aerobic exercise is continuous exercise such as walking, swimming, bicycling or dancing that elevates breathing and heart rate. It is recommended to include at least **150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week**, (e.g. 30 minutes, 5 days a week).

Start slowly, with 5 to 10 minutes per day, gradually building up to your goal. Multiple, shorter exercise sessions of at least 10 minutes, adding up to 150 minutes per week, can have some benefits for your health too. Try to have no more than 2 consecutive days without exercise.

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 credible exercise resource and start slowly. It is recommended to add **resistance exercises** that focus on muscle strength **2-3 times a week**. These include lifting weights, resistance bands or other exercise like leg squats or push-ups.

Staying motivated!

Starting something new can be hard. It can help to prepare 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 your good health when you reach them.
- Seek professional help from a personal trainer, or someone knowledgeable who can help you find a fitness regimen that will work for you.
- Using a step monitor (pedometer or accelerometer) can be helpful to track your activity.
- Physical activity releases feel good hormones. Take notice of how you feel after doing your activity, and congratulate yourself for doing it, even if it was hard.

For more information, talk to your health-care team or visit diabetes.ca

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