

# Learning About Diabetes and Exercise

## Can you exercise if you have diabetes?

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When you have diabetes, it's important to get regular exercise. This helps control your blood sugar level. You can still play sports, run, ride a bike, go swimming, and do other activities when you have diabetes.

## How can exercise help you manage diabetes?

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Your body turns the food you eat into glucose, a type of sugar. You need this sugar for energy. When you have diabetes, the sugar builds up in your blood. But when you exercise, your body uses sugar. This helps keep it from building up in your blood and results in lower blood sugar and better control of diabetes.

Exercise may help you in other ways too. It can help you reach and stay at a healthy weight. It also helps improve blood pressure and cholesterol, which can reduce the risk of heart disease.

Exercise can make you feel stronger and happier. It can help you relax and sleep better, and give you confidence in other things you do.

## How can you exercise safely?

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Before you start a new exercise program, talk to your doctor about how and when to exercise. You may need to have a medical exam and tests before you begin. Some types of exercise can be harmful if your diabetes is causing other problems, such as problems with your feet. Your doctor can tell you what types of exercise are good choices for you.

These tips can help you exercise safely when you have diabetes. If your diabetes is controlled by diet or medicine that doesn't lower your blood sugar, you don't need to eat a snack before you exercise.

- Check your blood sugar before you exercise. And be careful about what you eat.
  - If your blood sugar is less than 100, eat a carbohydrate snack before you exercise.
  - Be careful when you exercise if your blood sugar is over 300. High blood sugar can make you dehydrated. And that makes your blood sugar levels go even higher. If you have ketones in your blood or urine and your blood sugar is over 300, do not exercise.
- Don't try to do too much at first. Build up your exercise program bit by bit. Try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as riding a bike or swimming. You might try running or gardening. Try to include muscle-strengthening exercises at least 2 times a week. These exercises include push-ups and weight training. You can also use rubber tubing or stretch bands. You stretch or pull the tubing or band to build muscle strength. If you want to exercise more, slowly increase how hard or long you exercise.
- You may get symptoms of low blood sugar during exercise or up to 24 hours later. Some symptoms of low blood sugar, such as sweating, a fast heartbeat, or feeling tired, can be confused with what can happen anytime you exercise. Other symptoms may include feeling anxious, dizzy, weak, or shaky. So it's a good idea to check your blood sugar again.
- You can treat low blood sugar by eating or drinking something that has 15 grams of carbohydrate. These should be quick-sugar foods. Quick-sugar foods such as fruit juice, regular (not diet) soda, glucose tablets, hard candy, or raisins can help raise blood sugar. Check your blood sugar level again 15 minutes after having a quick-sugar food to make sure your level is getting back to your target range.

- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after you exercise.
- Wear medical alert jewelry that says you have diabetes. You can buy this at most drugstores.
- Pay attention to your body. If you are used to exercise and notice that you can't do as much as usual, talk to your doctor.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **C492** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Diabetes and Exercise**".

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