

Living Well with Diabetes

Exercise to help you manage your diabetes

Exercise is good for everybody. It helps people feel better physically, mentally, and emotionally. Physical activity is especially important for people with diabetes. You might be surprised by how quickly you'll see changes in your health when you start being more active.

Getting exercise every day can help you manage your diabetes:

- Your body will start to use insulin and food more efficiently.
- You'll find it easier to lose or maintain your weight.
- You might be able to take less of your diabetes medicine. You'll be less likely to develop other health problems, such as heart disease and high blood pressure.

It gets even better!

Exercise will also:

- Give you more energy.
- Make you stronger, more flexible, and improve your balance.
- Slow bone loss that comes with getting older.
- Improve your mood and lower your stress and feelings of anxiety.
- Help you relax and make it easier to fall asleep and sleep more soundly.

You can get the most benefit from activities that do the following:

Raise your heart rate.

Often called aerobic or cardiovascular exercises, these activities work your lungs and heart and help pump oxygen to your muscles.

Strengthen your muscles and bones.

These activities include lifting and pushing.

Improve your balance.

When you have good balance, you're less likely to fall.

Increase your flexibility.

Stretching can keep your muscles and joints more flexible, which can lower your risk for injury.

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What activities do you enjoy?

Come up with an exercise plan that works for you. Start by making a list of activities you enjoy and that will get you moving.

Activities I enjoy

Examples: Working in the garden Swimming Walking the dog

Talk with your doctor or nurse about how to make these activities a daily part of your diabetes plan. Your doctor, nurse, and dietitian will work with you to help you learn about adjusting your food or medicine for your increased activity level.

If you have other conditions, such as heart or eye problems, or numbness in your hands or feet, your doctor and nurse will let you know what you need to watch out for, or which activities to avoid.

If haven't been moving much lately, here are other ideas for activities you might try:

- **Water aerobics** classes for an aerobic workout that will also increase your strength and balance. The water makes the activity less stressful on your joints.
- **Chair exercises** while watching TV or a video. You'll get a cardiovascular workout by moving your arms and legs. Add exercise bands for upper body strength.
- **Tai-chi** or **gentle yoga** for both balance and increased flexibility.

Keys to remember:

- Start out slowly.
- Doing a small amount of exercise every day is better than doing nothing at all.
- Choose activities you enjoy and look forward to.
- Start from where you are right now and build up to 30 minutes most days of the week.
- **Have fun!**