

# Control your diabetes *For Life:*

Circular 569 H

## Exercise for People with Diabetes

- Regular physical activity is an important part of controlling your diabetes.
- A little physical activity every day can improve blood glucose control.
- For some people, diabetes medicines can be decreased or eliminated with weight loss and daily physical activity.
- Foot care is important when exercising.
- Walking, cycling, and swimming are good exercise choices.
- You can prevent low blood glucose during exercise by balancing insulin, food, and activity.

### Benefits of Exercise

Exercise is an important part of controlling your diabetes. When you have diabetes, being overweight or inactive can contribute to blood glucose problems. Increasing your daily activity, even by small amounts, can help improve blood glucose control, reduce the need for diabetes medications, reduce your chances for heart disease, and help control your weight. Exercise can also improve your quality of life and emotional well-being. Walking as little as 15 minutes a day can make a difference!

### Getting Started

For many people, the most difficult part of becoming more active is getting started. Just like brushing your teeth, daily exercise is a habit you need to fit into your lifestyle. To get started, make a plan or goal for yourself. Start with small, easy-to-achieve goals—like walking each evening for 10 minutes. Make an appointment or set aside a regular time. Find a walking buddy to keep it fun, or include a family member. Remember, exercise is good for the whole family! Keep a calendar or logbook of your progress and reward yourself for achieving your goals—weekly, monthly, and yearly. Soon your daily walk will be a habit you can't live without!



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### Safe Exercise

Exercise is safe for most people; however, certain precautions should be taken. After being inactive for many years, some people may be in poor physical condition. If you are over the age of 35 and have not been exercising regularly, see your doctor before

beginning or trying new forms of exercise. If you have eye problems from diabetes, make sure you check with your doctor before doing some exercises, such as lifting weights.

Pay attention to your feet if you plan to exercise. If you have problems with circulation or feeling in the legs and feet, choose activities that avoid trauma to your feet. Always wear comfortable shoes that protect your feet. Walking, biking, and swimming are good exercise choices for people who have diabetes.

### **Guidelines for People with Diabetes**

- Carry an identification card and wear a bracelet, necklace, or tag that identifies you as a person with diabetes.
- Check your blood glucose level before and after exercise.
- If you use insulin, avoid exercise during peak insulin action and take shots in locations other than your legs and arms.
- If you use insulin, decrease the dosage when you exercise. Consult with a health care provider or diabetes educator to learn how.
- Be aware of signs of hypoglycemia (low blood glucose) during and after exercise. Signs include feeling weak or shaky, a rapid heartbeat, and vision changes. Keep sources of carbohydrate (glucose tabs, hard candy, juice, etc.) handy to treat low blood glucose.
- Drink plenty of water before, after, and during exercise to prevent dehydration.
- Wear good-fitting, comfortable shoes that protect your feet from injury.

## **Where to Go for More Information**

■ Your health care provider

■ American Diabetes Association:  
**1-800-DIABETES**  
**www.diabetes.org**

■ National Diabetes Education Program:  
**1-800-438-5383** or visit the World Wide Web at  
**ndep.nih.gov** or  
**www.cdc.gov**

■ New Mexico Diabetes Prevention and Control Program  
**www.diabetesnm.org**

■ Your county Extension office

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