

Just Do It: Diabetes and Exercise

Most people with diabetes are aware that regular physical activity helps to lower blood glucose levels. Convincing yourself that you need to exercise is the easy part. The hard part is figuring out what to do, how to add activity into your busy life, and how to keep up with your exercise plan.

Getting Started

If you want to start by building more activity into your usual day, try these tips:

- Get up to change the TV channel rather than using the remote.
- Stand up and walk in place while watching television (or at least during commercials).
- Invest in a rebounder (mini-trampoline) and jump while watching TV.
- Ride a stationary bike while you are watching TV, reading a book, or talking.
- Limit TV and computer use at home to no more than 2 hours per day or reduce it by 30 minutes daily.
- Look for ways to take more steps throughout the day.
- Try taking stairs instead of an elevator or escalator whenever possible. If going up steps is too hard, start by only walking down stairs.
- Walk up or down escalators instead of standing still.
- Walk instead of standing on moving walkways in airports and other public places.
- Park at the farthest end of the lot; stop looking for the closest parking space.
- Get up and move for 3–5 minutes after every 30 minutes of a sedentary activity.
- Stand up or take a short walk during work breaks instead of remaining seated.
- Buy an inexpensive pedometer and try to add at least 2,000 steps each day.
- For every extra calorie you eat, add 20 steps to your daily total.
- Take the dog out for a daily walk; borrow a neighbor's dog if necessary.
- Check out more ideas to help you get moving at www.smallstep.gov.

Ramping It Up

Once you are more active during your regular day, you may want to begin a more structured exercise program. Here are some ideas about structured programs that may work for you.

Aerobic Exercise

- **Type:** Walking, cycling, swimming, aquatic exercises, aerobic exercise classes, jogging (if you have no foot or leg problems)

- **Duration:** At least 30 minutes of moderate exercise or 20 minutes of vigorous exercise
- **Frequency:** At least 5 days a week for moderate or 3 days for vigorous
- **Intensity:** Mild to vigorous (Use the “talk test” to monitor upper levels; if you can’t carry on a conversation, you’re exercising too hard.)

Resistance Training

- **Type:** At least 8–10 upper- and lower-body resistance/weight exercises
- **Duration:** 20–60 minutes total, with 2–3 minutes of rest between sets
- **Frequency:** 2–3 nonconsecutive days per week
- **Intensity:** low (2–3 sets of 15 repetitions per set) or moderate (2–3 sets of 8–12 repetitions per set), with a lower resistance on the first set as a warm-up, but subsequent sets resulting in exhaustion by the time you reach the desired number of repetitions

Flexibility Training

- **Type:** Stretches of all the major muscles groups in upper and lower body and torso
- **Duration:** Hold each stretch (without bouncing or pain) for 10–30 seconds

- **Frequency:** 2–3 days per week or after any exercise training
- **Intensity:** Never stretch to the point of pain or intense discomfort

Where to Find Exercise Programs

- Fitness gyms, health clubs and spas, and local universities and colleges
- Local YMCAs, Jewish community centers, and other affiliated organizations
- Senior centers or retirement communities
- Martial arts instructional centers (for tai chi, kickboxing, karate, and other classes)
- Workplace offerings of low-impact aerobics or other exercise classes
- Organized groups of people who walk together during lunch breaks

or after work hours at workplaces or in neighborhoods

Sticking With It

You may have tried to be more active in your daily life or started an exercise program in the past but just weren't able to stick with it. Life has a habit of getting in the way of our best intentions. Here are some tips for staying motivated.

- Set realistic goals or milestones to keep track of activities.
- Use a sticker chart to keep a visible account of all physical activities during the day.
- Set up non-food rewards for reaching short- and long-term exercise goals.
- Schedule activities into a daily calendar and keep these exercise “appointments.”

- Make exercise a priority, along with taking medicines, getting enough sleep, and eating a healthy diet.
- Find an exercise buddy to increase motivation for doing scheduled activities.
- Set up a good social network involving significant others, family members, friends, and co-workers in exercise.
- Vary daily activities and occasionally add in fun ones, such as social dancing or golf (without golf carts) to keep interest higher.
- Incorporate exercise into your outings: visit a museum, the zoo, or sporting events.
- Increase unstructured activities to get more total exercise time.
- For structured exercise, increase duration and intensity slowly to prevent injuries and burnout.



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