

IMPROVEMENT THROUGH MOVEMENT

Can I Exercise if I Have Diabetes?

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Yes, you can be physically active with diabetes. In fact, it is recommended. Physical activity alone, even without weight loss, can improve your diabetes. Getting enough exercise has been shown to reduce a person's average glucose levels and improve HgA1c. Physical activity also seems to improve how the body responds to insulin and decreases risk for cardiovascular disease.

Both aerobic and resistance exercises can improve glucose levels in people living with diabetes. Aerobic physical activity includes walking, bicycling and dancing, while resistance exercise includes activities that increase strength and muscle mass. Some examples include calisthenics and using resistant bands or free weights. The current recommendation is that people with diabetes aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week, as well as participate in resistance and strength exercises at least twice per week.

Did you know that dancing and gardening count as physical activity? Cleaning counts towards your activity minutes, too. Also, you don't need to get all of your physical activity done at one time — spread it throughout the day and week. Start slowly and build from where you are, then mix it up. Remember, you don't have to do it all at once, start with as little as 5 minutes and then build up gradually. Try different activities to keep you going and keep you interested.

Some examples of moderate physical activity that will help fulfill the recommended 150 minutes each week include walking (including at the grocery store and mall), stationary bicycling, swimming, badminton, mowing the lawn and mopping or scrubbing the floor.

Before beginning a program of physical activity of more than just brisk walking, you should be assessed by your doctor. If you are taking insulin, you need to keep a close eye on your carbohydrate intake and how you feel. If your medication dose is not adjusted properly, you may be at risk for hypoglycemia.

