

Physical Activity



Safety first

- If you have been inactive for some time, talk to your family health care provider before starting any exercise program that is more demanding than brisk walking.
- Make sure you wear comfortable, proper-fitting shoes.
- Wear your MedicAlert® bracelet or necklace.
- Listen to your body. Speak to your family health care provider if you are very short of breath or have chest pain.
- Monitor your blood glucose before, during and many hours after your activity to see how the exercise affects your blood glucose levels.
- Unless your diabetes is controlled by lifestyle or oral hypoglycemic agents that do not increase insulin levels, carry some form of fast-acting carbohydrate with you in case you need to treat low blood glucose (hypoglycemia) – for example, glucose tablets (preferred) or Life Savers®.

Start off slowly. Small amounts of exercise, like walking five to 10 minutes a day, can make a difference.

Both aerobic and resistance exercise are important for people living with diabetes.

Why is physical activity so important?

The health benefits of regular exercise include weight loss, stronger bones, improved blood pressure control, lower rates of heart disease and cancer as well as increased energy levels. If you have type 2 diabetes, regular exercise has special advantages: improving your body's sensitivity to insulin and helping you manage your blood glucose levels.

What kind of activity is best?

Aerobic exercises (such as brisk walking, running, swimming, dancing, playing hockey and skiing) work your heart and lungs and carry oxygen to your muscles.

Resistance exercises (such as weight training) increase muscle strength and add to the benefits of aerobic exercise. If you decide to begin resistance exercise, you should first get some instruction from a qualified exercise specialist and start slowly.

How much is enough?

Your goal should be to complete at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorously intense aerobic exercise each week (e.g., 30 minutes, five days a week).

You may have to start slowly, with as little as five to 10 minutes of exercise per day, gradually building up to your goal. The good news, though, is that multiple, shorter exercise sessions of at least 10 minutes each are probably as useful as a single longer session of the same intensity.

If you are able and when you are ready, try adding resistance exercises like lifting weights three times a week.

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Increase your physical activity

- Build time for physical activity into your daily routine.
- Try to be active most days of the week.
- Walk whenever you can, instead of taking the car.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the amount of effort; for instance, start with strolling and move on to brisk walking.
- Make family times active; try swimming or skating together instead of watching TV or a movie.
- Try new activities; learn to dance, play basketball, or ride a bike.
- Enjoy your improved sense of health and well-being!



Keep going!

Habits can be hard to change, so be prepared with a plan in case you stop feeling as motivated or inspired:

- Do something you like! It is hard to stick to an activity that is not fun. It may take you a few tries before you find the activity that is right for you.
- Have a support network. Ask your family, friends and co-workers to help you stay motivated by joining you for a walk or a workout at the gym.
- Set small, attainable goals and celebrate in a healthy way when you reach them.
- Talk to friends who have included physical activity into their daily routines and ask them how they got started.
- Buy a pair of walking shoes.
- Make yourself a list of the reasons why you might want to introduce physical activity into your life.

Plan on being active!

Try filling out this chart and check off each activity as it's completed, to kick-start the first few weeks of your new habit! As your body adjusts, make sure you're increasing the intensity and building up to 30 minutes a day – and more! For more information on getting active, watch the “Managing Your Fitness” video, which is part of this kit.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Example	Morning walk	Walk after dinner	Play hockey with boys	Ride bike to the library instead of driving	Family swim	Bowling night	Rake leaves
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							

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Content taken from the Canadian Diabetes Association's consumer fact sheet, *Physical Activity and Diabetes*.