

# Healthy Living: Exercise and Diabetes<sup>1</sup>

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Staying active is one of the best things you can do for your health. Regular physical activity can help you control your blood glucose levels, reduce body fat, and decrease your risk of heart disease. Staying active also can help you sleep better, improve posture and balance, maintain independent living, and improve quality of life. Below are some tips to help you create a fun and healthy exercise program. Start today!

## Before Starting to Exercise

Talk to your health care team. They may want you to have a physical exam before starting your new program. Your team can suggest exercises or design a workout routine that is best for your medical and physical needs.

## Getting Started

It is not always easy to start exercising but once you find enjoyable activities, you will see that staying active is not as difficult as you thought!



Figure 1. Speak with your doctor before beginning a vigorous exercise program, especially if you have been sedentary for a while.

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- Start slowly and build up.
- Find activities that you enjoy.
- Accumulate 20–40 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after your workout.

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- To prevent injury, warm up and stretch before you start. Then, cool down and stretch again at the end of your exercise routine.



Figure 2. Protect your muscles by warming up and then gently stretching before exercising.  
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## Exercise Tips for People with Diabetes

- Get a thorough medical exam before you start to exercise.
- Work with your health care team to design an exercise program specific to your needs.
- Always wear your medical identification bracelet, necklace, or ID tag in case of an emergency.
- Check your blood glucose before and after exercise.
- If you start to feel shaky or nervous during your activity, your blood glucose may have gotten too low. Stop what you are doing and check your blood glucose to be sure you are in your targeted range.
- Exercise 1 to 1½ hours after eating to prevent low blood glucose.
- Be prepared to treat low blood glucose. Always carry juice, hard candy, non-diet soda, raisins, or another fast-acting source of sugar.

- Inspect your feet daily and after exercising.
- Avoid exercising when your blood glucose is high (240 mg/dl or more).



Figure 3. People with diabetes should wear a medical alert bracelet, in case of an emergency.  
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## Recommended Resources

American Diabetes Association. *Food & Fitness*. <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/fitness/>. (Accessed December 5, 2014.)

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC). *Diabetes Diet, Eating, & Physical Activity*. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/diet-eating-physical-activity> (Accessed September 22, 2017.)