

# Getting Started with Physical Activity for People with Diabetes

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## What can physical activity do for me?

Physical activity

- helps keep your blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol levels on target
- lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke
- relieves stress
- helps insulin work better
- strengthens your heart, muscles, and bones
- improves your blood circulation and tones your muscles
- keeps your body and your joints flexible

Even if you've never exercised before, you can find ways to add physical activity to your day. You'll get benefits, even if your activities aren't hard to do. Once physical activity is a part of your routine, you'll wonder how you did without it.

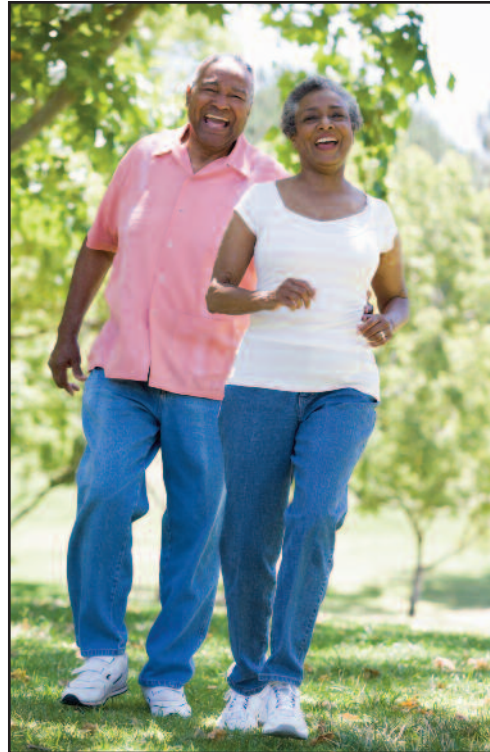
## If I haven't been very active lately, what should I do first?

Start with a check up. Your health care provider will check your heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, feet, and nervous system. If you have health problems, your provider can recommend physical activities that will help you but won't make your conditions worse.

## What kinds of physical activity are best?

A complete physical activity routine includes 3 different kinds of activities:

- activity—walking, using the stairs, moving around—throughout the day
- aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, or dancing
- strength training, such as lifting light weights



Find an activity you enjoy, such as walking.

## Being active throughout the day

Being active helps burn calories. Get up and move every 90 minutes if you sit for long periods of time. Place a check mark next to the things you'd like to try:

- Walk instead of drive whenever possible.
  - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
  - Walk around while you talk on the phone.
  - Work in the garden, rake leaves, or wash the car.
  - Play with the kids.
  - Park at the far end of the shopping center lot and walk to the store.
  - Others things I can do:
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## Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise makes your heart and bones strong, relieves stress, helps your insulin work better, and improves blood circulation. It also lowers your risk for heart disease by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels on target.

For most people with diabetes, it's best to aim for a total of about 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week (a total of at least 150 minutes each week). If you haven't been very active recently, start with 5 or 10 minutes a day. Then work up to more time each week. Or split up your activity for the day—try a brisk 10-minute walk 3 times a day. Your health care team can show you how to warm up and stretch before aerobic exercise and how to cool down afterward.

Here are some ways to get aerobic exercise:

- Take a brisk walk every day.
- Go dancing or take a dance aerobics class.
- Swim or do water aerobic exercises.
- Take a bicycle ride outdoors or use a stationary bicycle indoors.

### My plan for aerobic exercise:

What I'll do:

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What I need to get ready:

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Which days and times:

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How long each session will be:

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How I'll warm up and cool down:

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## Strength training

Strength training helps build strong bones and muscles and makes everyday chores like carrying groceries easier for you. With more muscle, you burn more calories, even at rest. Strength training also helps your insulin work better.

Do your strength routine 3 times a week. Here are some things to try:

- Lift light weights at home.
- Join a strength training class that uses weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes.
- When you travel, make time to use the hotel fitness center.

### My plan for strength training:

What I'll do:

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What I need to get ready:

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Which days and times:

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How long each session will be:

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## How to keep a record of your progress

Keep track of your efforts to be active. You might find that writing everything down helps keep you on target. Think about what works best for you:

- Keep a small notebook with you all day. Write down what kind of physical activity you've done and for how long.
- Mark your activity program on a calendar or daily planner and chart your progress.
- Surf the web and find an Internet-based exercise-tracking log and record how you are doing online.

## How a support system can help

You might find it helpful to meet on a regular basis with people who are also trying to be active. Think about joining a group for exercise or general support. Or find a walking buddy. Then work together to reach your goals.



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