

# Type 2 diabetes & exercise

## Why is exercise important?

Regular exercise is important for everyone including people with diabetes. People with either type 1 or type 2 will benefit. Special additional precautions are needed if you are doing intensive and/or prolonged exercise. Seek advice from your specialist or diabetes educator.

### Exercise helps your insulin work well

A major factor in type 2 diabetes is a poor response of the body to insulin. It has been clearly shown that regular physical activity can improve the body's response to insulin.

### Exercise helps control blood glucose

Regular physical activity helps control overall blood glucose by helping the body to use the glucose better. Exercise also assists in reducing weight.

### Exercise improves muscle tone and heart function

Circulation and lung capacity improve. Exercise can help in lowering blood fats and helps control 'bad' cholesterol so you are less likely to have blood vessel disease (eg heart attack or stroke).

### Exercise helps lower your blood pressure

The reduction of blood fats and improvement in heart function can also lower blood pressure.

### Exercise improves your sense of well being

Many people find that exercise relieves tension and stress, and this means a more positive attitude to life.

## How much exercise?

A suggested ideal is 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day. You can break it up into 10 minute sessions 3 times a day. Although any increase in activity will have some beneficial effects, aim for at least 5 days a week. Moderate physical activity means exercise that is strenuous enough to make you puff a bit.

## What kind of exercise?

You can make up some of your exercise simply by changing your lifestyle. Get off the bus a stop early. Use the stairs instead of the lift or elevator when you are only going up a few floors. Take brisk, regular walks or use your bicycle whenever you can, to the shops, deli or church.

There is a wide variety of sport and exercise activities available. Choose one that you will enjoy and want to continue. Walking, golf, croquet, bowls, tennis, swimming, dancing and cycling are among those that are safe and readily accessible to most people.

Aerobics is another good way of exercising. It is helpful to consult an instructor to find a level to suit you and then build up gradually.



## Footwear and foot care

It is especially important for people with diabetes to wear comfortable, well fitting shoes. Socks should freely absorb perspiration, try woollen or cotton socks.

If your feet are at risk of problems examine them regularly and if there is any redness, swelling or sore spots see your doctor, podiatrist or diabetes educator. Speak to your diabetes educator about a 'Foot Care Protection Plan'.

## Managing diabetes during exercise

Each person's response to exercise is different, it is important to determine your own response and to work out your own way of balancing your food, insulin or tablets. Your doctor, diabetes educator or dietitian will be able to assist you.

### Blood Glucose

Depending on your diabetes treatment and the intensity of the physical activity, you may need to adjust your food and / or medication. With normal activity such as walking, light swimming etc it is unlikely changes will need to be made. If your activity is for a long duration or at an intensive level eg bush walking or squash, then adjustments may be needed. Always carry your blood glucose meter and hypo treatment if you are at risk of low blood glucose.

## Important precautions

**Health check** – before starting an exercise program have a check up with your doctor.

**Wear your medical identification** eg Medic Alert

**Getting started** – warm up before exercise. Start slowly and set a pace that is right for you.

**Check-** blood glucose levels before exercise. If you are at risk of hypos you may need to test before, during and after exercise.

## Caution

**Low blood glucose levels** – the responses to low blood glucose levels such as sweating and palpitations, may be confused with the response to exercise. Take steps to avoid low blood glucose levels and always carry your hypo treatment (eg jelly beans). See your diabetes educator for a hypo action plan.

**Retinopathy** – if you have retinopathy you may need to avoid strenuous exercise until your eye specialist indicates that your condition is stable.

**Neuropathy** – if you have lost sensation in your feet you should talk to your doctor or diabetes educator about what exercise is safest for you to do.

## Important points to remember

- > Exercise can have positive benefits for diabetes and general health
- > Wear suitable footwear
- > If you are at risk of low blood glucose be prepared and have an action plan
- > Have an action plan for strenuous or prolonged exercise
- > Discuss the need for medical alerting identification with your doctor or diabetes educator.

---

## For more information

**Diabetes Outreach**  
8 Woodville Rd  
Woodville South SA 5011  
Telephone: (08) 8222 6775  
[www.diabetesoutreach.org.au](http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au)

