



Physical Activity

Physical activity is particularly beneficial for those with diabetes. It is a first line part of diabetes management along with healthy eating, and if applicable, tablets or insulin. Physical activity can become an enjoyable part of your day with long term benefits to your health.

Being more physical active will improve your general health and quality of life.

Increasing your physical activity by any amount will be of benefit.

What's in it for you?

If you have diabetes, physical activity:

- Helps to lower blood glucose levels.
- Helps to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Helps to control blood pressure.
- Helps to improve blood cholesterol.
- Helps to better manage/reduce stress and pain.
- Builds/maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Improves mood.
- Helps maintain independence in older adults (prevention of falls).

What type of physical activity and how often?

The Australian National Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that you:

- **Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.**
Use the stairs instead of the lift, walk to the bus stop or get off the bus one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.

- **Be active everyday in as many ways as you can.**

Do some gardening, take the dog for a walk, have a stroll after dinner, play actively with your children, enjoy parks, beaches, markets and galleries.

- **Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity.**

Try 3 x 10 minute bursts or 30 minutes continuously on, most preferably, all days of the week. A good indicator that you are exercising at a moderate level is if you 'huff and puff' a little when you are talking during the activity.

- **If you can, also enjoy some regular vigorous exercise.**

For extra health and fitness benefits try including some regular vigorous exercise e.g. playing tennis or netball, aerobics, power walking or jogging.

- **Try to include some "resistance training" two-three times a week.**

For example 8-10 different exercises using all the major muscle groups. (E.G. lifting small weights, wall push ups, sitting and standing from a chair.)

Repeat the exercises 8-12 times. If unsure consult a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist.

Be creative and try something different; ballroom dancing, water aerobics, water walking and Tai Chi.

Check with your doctor what level of physical activity is right for you.

Do you find yourself using any of these barriers when you think about physical activity?

- **I'm too old:** age is no barrier to being healthy as long as you set yourself realistic goals for physical activity.
- **I can't walk:** with correct instruction exercise programs can be developed for people with mobility issues.
- **I'm too busy:** Think of exercise as an opportunity to have time for yourself or fun with family and friends.
- **It's too hot/cold:** walk at a shopping centre you will always be under cover and in an air-conditioned facility.
- **I get bored:** Choose an activity you like. Exercise with others and make it a social occasion.
- **I'm too tired:** Exercise actually increases your energy levels and helps you to sleep better.
- **I can't afford it:** There are many low cost activities to choose from. Start a walking program the only cost is some suitable shoes and loose fitting clothes.

Planning tips

Planning is very important when starting to increase your activity levels. With good planning physical activity can be fun, safe and very rewarding. Make sure you:

- **Check with your doctor before you start.**
- Choose an activity you will enjoy.
- Organise a friend or family member to join you (it helps to keep you both committed).
- Wear good quality, closed in footwear. Inspect your feet before and after exercising.
- Protect yourself against the sun when exercising outdoors.
- Drink water regularly.
- Take short breaks along the way if you are active for long periods.
- Warm up before and cool down after physical activity.

- Use a pedometer to measure your daily steps.
- Check blood glucose levels before, sometimes during and after physical activity if you have type 1 diabetes or are on certain medications for type 2 diabetes. Check with your doctor/diabetes educator if you are unsure how your medication may influence your blood glucose levels during and after physical activity.



Starting your program

If you have not been physical active you should not expect to run a marathon at your first session! The key is to set short-term achievable goals and build up your fitness gradually. 'Do a bit more tomorrow than you did today-continue the trend'

A physical activity program for beginners could be as simple as:

Week one: Walk once a day for 10 minutes

Week two: Walk once a day for 15 minutes

Week three: Walk once a day for 20 minutes

Week four: Walk once a day for 30 minutes

Ongoing: Don't give up! Keep walking once a day for 30 minutes or twice a day for 15 minutes.



You should always carry quickly absorbed glucose such as Carbotest, jellybeans or glucose tablets if you are on medication or insulin therapy in case your blood glucose level drops too low.

Physical activity can lower blood glucose levels for up to 48 hours. However before this decrease you can expect an initial rise in blood glucose levels in the first hour after exercise. This rise varies between individuals. It may be necessary for adjustments to be made to your medication, insulin or healthy eating plan.

Start today to be more active and enjoy the benefits to your health and general wellbeing. You will be better off!!

For further information contact Diabetes WA on 1300136588

Monitoring your blood glucose levels during physical activity.

It is important to monitor your blood glucose levels during physical activity, particularly when starting a program or increasing the intensity.

For the first couple of sessions it is recommended you test before, during and after physical activity. This allows you to gain an understanding of your body's response to physical activity. It is important to know your own blood glucose response for two important reasons:

- Many of the early signs of a low blood glucose level (sweating, feeling faint and weakness) are also a common response when you are doing physical activity
- Everyone reacts differently.
- Testing your blood before and after exercise tells you the effect that exercise has on your blood glucose levels.

If you are on medications that may cause low blood glucose levels you should monitor prior to every session. Check with your doctor/diabetes educator about any effects of your particular medication/s.

