

Diabetes and Exercise



The University of Rochester Medical Center's commitment to help Rochester become America's healthiest community by 2020



How exercise helps manage diabetes?

- Regular exercise benefits diabetes by improving insulin control and reducing the risk for cardiac complications.
- Increases energy and can simply make you feel better!
- Increases strength and ease of movement.
- Helps to control blood pressure, blood fats (lipids), and blood sugar.

Precautions

- Insulin should not be injected into sites on the exercising limb if exercise is planned for immediately after the injection.
- Carry something to eat that contains carbohydrates (glucose/sugar). Use it to prevent or treat low blood sugar if needed.
- Drink more liquids that contain no calories, when exercising.
- Stop exercising immediately if you have warning symptoms: faintness, headache, visual disturbances, confusion, apathy, nervousness, unsteadiness of gait, or tremor of the hands.
- Best to exercise at your peak energy level, usually one to three hours after meals.
- Always check your feet for signs of redness or infection. Call you doctor immediately if you have a foot problem.
- Do not exercise if your blood sugar is higher than 240 mg/dl, or if you have pain in your legs or feet.
- Avoid exercising in extreme heat or cold.

Your specialized exercise prescription

- Exercise should be performed on a regular basis, preferably 5-7 days per week.
- Best to exercise at a low to moderate intensity. Avoid exercising at high intensity.
- Strive to exercise for 20-40 minutes. Build up slowly and gradually to this level.
- If you exercise longer than one hour, monitor blood glucose levels periodically using a "finger stick".
- Select an activity that you enjoy. Morning is best, avoid exercise in the evening.
- Wear clean, smooth-fitting socks made of natural fibers.
- Choose well fitting shoes that offer comfort and support.
- Exercise can be many things; walking, dancing, or water walking. The key is continuous activity.

Principles of Success

- Find an exercise partner or class you can join.
- Do not compare yourself to others. Just do the best you can each time.
- Always take the time to care for you feet.
- Start slow, gradually add a few more minutes of aerobic activity each week until you can sustain 40-60 minutes of continuous activity.
- Always warm up and cool down (in the 20-60 minutes) to allow your body time to adjust to the demands of exercise.