

Diabetes and Exercise Safety Tips

One of the most important things for people with diabetes to learn about being active is how to do it safely.

Exercising safely will ensure you maintain your activity routine and enjoy the benefits of activity each day.

Being more active with exercise for many people with type 2 diabetes can make the difference in feeling at their best while minimizing the number of medications needed to manage blood sugar well.

Before you begin to exercise ask your diabetes care team what intensity level is best for you. Throughout your exercise session, check your intensity level to ensure you are working out hard enough to get the benefits of physical activity but not so hard that you may be unsafe.

One way to do this is to monitor your Target Heart Rate. You can do this by taking your own pulse or having a healthcare provider check your blood pressure throughout the session.

Since everyone's endurance level is different, work with your diabetes care team to find the safest target heart rate for you and the correct way to monitor it.

The biggest safety concern for people who take insulin or certain oral medications for diabetes is that exercise can cause your blood glucose to drop too low.

When your blood glucose drops below 70 mg/dL you have low blood glucose. This is called Hypoglycemia.

When you have low blood glucose, your body doesn't get the energy it needs to function.

Symptoms you may experience include increased sweating, headache, weakness, confusion, a cold sweat or clammy feeling, shakiness, hunger, irritability, and dizziness.

If you notice any of these symptoms while exercising, stop at once.

And take something to raise your blood glucose.

Talk to your diabetes care team about the best ways to avoid and treat hypoglycemia.

"It's helpful to have a quick-acting carbohydrate, like either juice, half cups of juice or even skim milk. A whole cup of skim milk can be a treatment for low blood sugar. It's also very important if they're traveling to carry a treatment with them, something like glucose tablets or another easy-to-digest form of carbohydrate."

Your diabetes care team may also recommend you delay your exercise session if your blood glucose is too high.

If this is the case, work with your diabetes care team to learn what you can do to lower your blood glucose before you exercise.

And finally, when you have diabetes you need to pay extra attention to your skin and feet. Any increased activity can be hard on your feet and skin and may lead to an injury that could take a long time to heal. So, examine your feet daily for blisters, red spots, cuts or bruises.

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You can prevent foot problems by wearing comfortable, well-fitting shoes that are designed for your exercise activity.

Wear good, seamless socks that absorb moisture and keep your feet dry. And always put on clean, dry socks after you exercise.

Choose comfortable clothes when you exercise. Drink plenty of water, especially when you are outdoors, and the weather is warm. Exercise indoors when the weather is extremely hot, cold, humid or the air quality is poor.

Whatever activities you decide to add to your routine, make sure you do them safely. Exercising safely will help you enjoy the health benefits for the long-term.