

EXERCISE AND YOUR DIABETES

Exercise helps improve both your general health and your diabetes control.

Exercise can

- Make you feel good
- Help you to control your weight
- Improve your circulation
- Lower your blood sugar

Improving health may help you

- manage the stresses and strains of life
- control your risk of heart disease
- prevent brittle bones (osteoporosis) in later life
- reduce the risk of some cancers e.g. cancer of the colon (according to the Health Education Authority)
- keep you mobile and independent in later life

You can get all of these benefits from gentle, moderate or strenuous exercise.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE SHOULD I DO?

- 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week can improve health.
- If you are new to exercise then think of this as a target level and build up to it gradually.
- **Moderate** means enough to raise your heartbeat and make you feel warm and slightly - not uncomfortably - out of breath.
- **Physical activity** can include gardening, brisk walking, cycling, swimming and dancing as well as playing sports.

HOW TO GET STARTED? : QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Can I include more activity regularly in my everyday life?
- Can I use stairs rather than lifts, walk a couple of bus stops or park further away from work or the shops?
- How can I vary my activity so that I don't get bored?
- What time of day is best? Pick a time when your energy levels are highest.
- How long will my activity last and how energetic will I be?

You may need to be examined by a doctor before taking up strenuous exercise.

EXERCISE, GLUCOSE and INSULIN

Depending on the type of exercise you do, you may need to lower your insulin dose

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and/or increase the food you eat to avoid low blood sugars (hypos).

- Gentle activity may not affect your blood sugar levels.
- For short strenuous exercise (e.g. squash), you may need more food. beforehand and extra food afterwards at your next snack or main meal
- For prolonged exercise (e.g. a long cycle ride, football or rugby match), you may need to take extra food before, during and after your activity.
- After exercise: your muscles will take at least 1-2 hours to refuel. During this time your blood sugar may still drop so it is important to check your blood sugar levels some hours after exercise to prevent delayed hypos, which may occur in the night.

Remember that everyone is different and there will be some trial and error involved in working out how to balance your diabetes with your exercise. Your diabetes nurse can help you work out a system that suits you. **Don't stop your insulin.**

THINGS TO REMEMBER IF YOU TAKE INSULIN

- You must do regular blood sugar tests to check the balance between your activity, insulin and snacks
- Ask your diabetes nurse for advice about reducing your insulin dose before planned exercise
- Make sure that you have some sugar, glucose tablets, chocolate or a sugary drink handy while you exercise (perhaps in your pocket)
- You may need to eat extra food before and after exercise
- You may also need to reduce insulin doses later in the day if you have been doing very strenuous exercise e.g. hill-walking for several hours
- The absorption rate of your insulin may be different with exercise; this will depend on the form of exercise & where you usually inject your insulin.
- The national controlling bodies of some sports (e.g. solo sailing, hang gliding, some forms of motor sport) do not allow people taking insulin to participate. These restrictions do vary so ask Diabetes UK for up to date advice (Diabetes UK Careline is 020 7424 1030).

DIABETES NURSES CONTACT NUMBERS

(during working day hours only Mon- Fri)

Ninewells Hospital Team	01382 632293
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Perth Team	01738 473476