Add exercise to reduce risk of diabetes and boost overall health

Exercise plays an important role in diabetes prevention by making the body’s cells more sensitive to insulin. Improved insulin sensitivity means more glucose is removed from the blood and used for energy. Exercise also increases the blood flow to working muscles resulting in more glucose being delivered and used for fuel, even when insulin levels are not adequate.

Plan on moving your body at least 30 minutes every day and looking for ways to decrease the time you spend sitting throughout the day.

Remember: Before you get started with any new exercise routine, be sure to talk to your doctor!

Cardiovascular (Aerobic) Activity

What is Cardiovascular Exercise?

Cardiovascular (also called “cardio” or known as aerobic exercise) is any type of physical activity that raises your heart rate higher than normal.

Cardio can be helpful for protecting your heart, controlling weight and also for managing Type 2 diabetes risk by improving your body’s use of insulin.

To keep your blood sugar level low over time, aim to fit in some cardio exercise daily. Examples of cardio include:

- Walking, jogging, hiking, using the treadmill
- Riding a bike or stationary bike
- Using an elliptical or rowing machine
- Swimming, dancing

Include these elements in your cardiovascular exercise plan:

1: Frequency: Aim for at least 5 days per week

2: Duration:
- 30 minutes of daily exercise is a good goal for overall health.
- 60 minutes of daily exercise may be required to achieve weight loss.
- Can be done in smaller increments if you’re unable to take a 30-60 minute block of uninterrupted time to exercise

3: Intensity
- To gain the benefits of exercise, you must perform it at a moderate to vigorous intensity. Click here for examples of moderate to vigorous intensity exercises.
- Calculate the intensity of your workouts. Click here to learn more about monitoring your exercise intensity.
- If maintaining an overall moderate intensity is difficult at first, try exercising at varying intensities in shorter intervals for 5 minutes and then drop to a lower intensity for 5 minutes.
- Alternate between high and low intensity for the duration of your workout and gradually increase the minutes of high intensity per bout.
Strength Training

Strength training (also called resistance training) builds muscle through activities such as lifting weights, pulling on stretchy elastic “resistance bands,” or using specific strength training equipment. You can also perform equipment-free strengthening exercises such as push-ups and squats that use your own body weight.

How can strength training help?
- Strength training builds muscle, and muscle burns calories, making it a leading way to lose weight.
- Research shows that strength training helps manage diabetes risk by improving how your body uses insulin and lowering glucose.
- Other health benefits include helping you build strong bones and increase your stamina.

How do I start?
- Try doing two 20-minute sessions per week.
- Start with a 5-minute easy strength training exercise as a warm-up to your aerobic routine.
- If you are new to strength training, start with light weights and 10 to 12 repetitions of each exercise. Choose weights that allow you to do the first 6-8 reps without difficulty but that are heavy enough that the last 3 reps are challenging (usually 3 to 8 lbs. for women and 8 to 12 lbs. for men). Once you are certain you have correct form for your exercises, you can gradually build up to heavier weights and more repetitions as your strength increases.
- An ideal workout should include 8-10 exercises that target your major muscles in your arms, chest, legs, and back. For example, bicep curls, chest press, lateral raises, tricep kickbacks, bentover rows, squats, heel raises, and step ups would target all of these muscles. (Click the links to learn how to do the exercises.)
- Start with 2 sets of each exercise, doing 10-15 reps per set.

What type of activity is best for lowering the risk of diabetes?

The answer is simple...any activity that you will do on a consistent basis! Whether it is dancing, gardening, taking brisk walks, going to the gym, or taking an exercise class, try to engage regularly in activities that make your heart beat harder and make you breathe faster. Regular physical activity can help you control your blood glucose levels, lose excess weight, and improve insulin sensitivity. All of these changes mean you can decrease your risk for Type 2 diabetes as well as other health conditions.

You can start today!

You don’t need a gym membership, fancy equipment, or even a lot of experience to begin exercising. If you’re new to exercising, here are some simple ideas to get you started:
- Walking or jogging—bring a buddy and you can both enjoy the healthy benefits!
- Aerobics or yoga—you can find videos online to guide you through the workout
- Simple exercises like sit-ups, lunges, and jumping jacks—you can do them right at home, no equipment needed, even during commercial breaks of your favorite TV shows!
- Outdoor physical activities like mowing the lawn with a push mower, gardening, raking leaves, or shoveling snow

Now that you have completed Lesson 1, please proceed to the next lesson.

Source: Diabetes.org