



Physical Activity and Exercise

Being physically active and getting enough exercise is important for everyone, but *especially* if you have diabetes. Exercise has so many health benefits. Not only does it decrease your risk for things like heart disease and cancer (among other things), but it can also help you manage diabetes, and improve your blood sugar control - muscles are one of the body's biggest users of glucose, so engaging them is a great way to lower blood sugar.

Getting started

- If you haven't been very active for a while, or are just getting back into an exercise routine, check with your care team and/or AFM provider before you jump in.
- Start by setting small goals that you *know* you can achieve. If you haven't been active at all recently, start slow, and build upon your successes. Make your goals S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound). Example: *"I will walk for 10 minutes 3 times next week to start my fitness program that will improve my health."*

What is your own S.M.A.R.T. goal to get started?

- Once you have a goal, schedule the activities you planned into your calendar. Make appointments with yourself that you keep, just like all your others.
- Why is getting more active important to you? To be healthier? To have fewer medications to worry about? To be able to play with your children? Be around for grandchildren? Whatever your reasons are, find ways to remind yourself of them on your calendar so that you'll keep these important appointments with yourself.

Work your way up

- For the best health benefits, the recommendation is to get at least 150 minutes per week of moderately intense exercise (brisk walking, swimming, bicycling, etc.).
- As you start exercising more regularly, gradually increase the time or the intensity of your workouts to continue improving your fitness.
- If you're just starting out and exercising for 30 minutes at a time isn't realistic, break up your workout into 10 minute chunks and spread them out through the day.



Find an activity (and a buddy) you enjoy

- Do you hate jogging but love swimming? Great! Swimming it is. There are so many fun activities out there – probably some you’ve never even heard of (pickle-ball, anyone?). Chances are, if you try enough activities, you’ll find *something* you really enjoy! Check out places like the local recreation facilities, senior centers (not just for seniors), or various clubs and organizations in town.
- Recruit a buddy! If you’re struggling to get motivated, enlist a friend or loved one who can exercise with you.
- Even if you can’t exercise together, having an Accountabil-i-Buddy can be just as encouraging. Share your goals with someone, and ask them to check in with you regularly to help you stay on track.

Build Muscle

- Adding resistance exercises to your routine will help keep your muscles and bones healthy, increase the size of your glucose-burners (muscles), and also help you burn more calories even when you’re not exercising. Just as with cardio exercise, start with a routine that is appropriate for your current fitness level, and work up from there. A good goal to aim for is to work all the major muscles in your body 2-3 times per week with resistance exercises.
- You don’t necessarily have to hit the gym to get a good resistance workout in. You can target most of the muscles in your body with some basic equipment at home – or even just using your own body weight!



Keep a record

- Take your blood sugar before, during, and after exercise. This will help you keep track of how your body responds to exercise so you can prevent large fluctuations in your glucose levels.
- Keeping a fitness log is also a great way to track your progress and motivate yourself to continue your activity program.
- Use a fitness tracking app (see the AFM list of apps, or try myfitnesspal.com or mapmyfitness.com). This helps you see how you’re doing, and you can connect with others who are working toward goals if you like.

Watch for symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)

- When you exercise, sometimes blood sugar can get low. Make sure you check your blood sugar while you’re exercising, especially if you are planning a new activity or making a change in the duration or the intensity of your workout.
- Stop exercising if:
 - Your blood sugar is 70mg/dL or lower
 - You feel shaky, weak, or confused
- Eat or drink something to raise your blood sugar level

After exercise

- Check your blood sugar right after exercise and then again if you feel “low” or shaky and/or weak. Exercise uses sugar that’s stored in your muscles and liver. When your body replenishes these stores, it uses sugar from your blood. This is one of the ways exercise can help you better manage diabetes, but you need to know how your body reacts.
- The more strenuous your workout, the longer your blood sugar will be affected.
- If you do have low blood sugar after exercise, have a small snack with at least 15 grams of carbohydrates and some protein. A good example would be cheese and crackers or an apple with peanut butter. 3 to 4 ounces of fruit juice is also a good choice if you have low blood sugar following a workout.

Resources

www.fcgov.com/recreator/

www.meetup.com

www.niddk.nih.gov