

Keeping hypos at bay

In general, when you have diabetes, physical activity is likely to make your blood glucose levels go down. This is not just true for people using insulin but for all people with diabetes.

So, to avoid your levels falling too low, before and after exercising:

- Always take a small snack before you start exercising.
- Before you begin, test to make sure your blood glucose levels are not too low.
- Have glucose tablets, a sugary drink or a snack at hand while you exercise, in case you feel hypo.
- Test again after you exercise, and ask yourself:
 - How low are my levels?
 - Do I need a snack?
 - Should I have had a bigger snack before I started?

Watch out for delayed hypos

If you have undertaken vigorous exercise, keep an eye on your levels over the next 36 hours as you may need to make some longer-term adjustments to your diet to avoid going hypo later.



Diabetes and exercise



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References: 1. Joslin's Diabetes Mellitus, 14th Edition 2005, New York Ovid Technologies. 2. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health Bethesda, Md. NIDDK. 3. Kronenberg: Williams Textbook of Endocrinology 11th Edition 2008.

Please consult your healthcare professional before making any changes. Information contained herein is for distribution outside of the USA only.

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Exercise is good for everyone

When you have diabetes, regular exercise is recommended by Healthcare Professionals for a number of reasons.

Exercise:

- Tones your muscles, and muscles are more sensitive to insulin than fat.
- Uses up energy and lowers blood sugar (glucose) levels.
- Helps you to maintain or achieve a healthy weight.
- Helps to reduce stress.
- Can increase your lung capacity and the amount of oxygen you can take into your bloodstream.
- Helps to reduce your cholesterol levels and your blood pressure, which in turn lowers your risk of heart disease.
- Improves the circulation of blood around your body, which reduces the risk of arterial disease (this is the medical term for problems involving blood vessels). Arterial disease can result in other cardiovascular diseases.

Exercise helps release endorphins, hormones that help you feel good!



How much exercise should I participate in?

- It is generally recommended that you should exercise for thirty minutes five times a week. Some authorities say that you can spread those thirty minutes out over the course of a day.
- Start slowly with just five minutes at a time if you need to and build up gradually to thirty minutes a day.
- Work with your healthcare professional to devise an exercise programme specifically for you.

Are there any times when I should not exercise?

If your levels are too high:

- Exercise can make your levels go up even further if your blood glucose levels are already high and you do not have enough insulin available, (you may have forgotten to take your insulin or your tablets).
- Your body moves its glucose stores from your liver into your bloodstream to give you more energy, but you don't have enough insulin to move it into your muscles where it can be used.

Exercise and illness – a bad mix:

- Your blood glucose levels will rise to fight off infections, so all your insulin will be needed.
- Do not exercise if your blood sugar level is greater than 15.0mmol/L, or if you have ketones.



Find the activities that suit you

Whilst all exercise is beneficial, it's best to choose activities that meet your goals and are safe for you to do.

- If you seldom exercise, ask your healthcare professional what sort of intensity and frequency of physical activity is right for you. If you have heart, eye or blood pressure problems, you must seek medical advice before starting a new exercise program.
- To prevent injury, ensure you warm up with gentle stretching before and after exercise.
- Take good care of your feet:
 - Always wear socks and make sure that your footwear fits well.
 - Be very aware of any developing blisters – and take care of them properly.
 - Be careful if you have diabetic foot problems. Running and treadmill work are not suitable exercises for this condition. Swimming or cycling are much kinder to the feet.
- Be careful if you want to lift heavy weights. Sudden lifting can increase your blood pressure.

Wear your diabetes ID tag in case you have a hypo or an accidental injury while you are exercising. It will help the medical team to know that you are taking tablets or insulin.