

## Exercise: How to Keep your Motivated and Safe

This article was published in the following Scient Open Access Journal:

Journal of Global Diabetes & Clinical Metabolism

Received September 27, 2017; Accepted October 04, 2017; Published October 07, 2017

### Samuel Grossman\*

Instructor Skaggs School of Pharmacy of the University of Colorado, USA

Exercise is an important and valuable activity for people with diabetes. It can improve blood glucose levels as well as helping to lose weight, reduce hypertension, and improve cardiovascular fitness. An effective workout routine for individuals with diabetes is one that includes both aerobic exercise and strength training, also known as resistance exercise. People with type 2 diabetes who followed a dual program showed marked improvement in controlling their blood sugar after just 12 weeks, according to a study published in February 2015 in the Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness. Individuals with diabetes who exercise also reported having more energy and feeling better about themselves (1-3).

Here are some tips for individuals with diabetes before starting an exercise:

- Protect your feet:
  - Wear cotton or cotton-polyester blend socks to keep your feet dry and prevent blisters.
  - Consider using silica gel or air midsoles in your shoes.
- Maintain hydration, since dehydration can have bad effects on blood glucose levels and heart function:
  - Drink 17 oz of fluid 2 hours before exercise.
  - Drink fluids during exercise, particularly in hot weather.
- Include a proper warm-up and cool-down period:
  - Warm-up: 5-10 minutes of aerobic activity such as walking or cycling at a low-intensity level. This prepares your skeletal muscles, heart, and lungs for a progressive increase in exercise intensity.
  - Stretch: 5-10 minutes before or after your warm-up.
  - Cool-down: 5-10 minutes, similar to your warm-up. This will gradually bring your heart rate down to its pre-exercise level.
- Participate only in moderate weight training programs, using light weights and high repetitions for maintaining or enhancing upper body strength. High-resistance exercise using weights may be acceptable for young people with diabetes but should be avoided by those who are older or have long-standing diabetes.
- Individuals with diabetes have to be reminded to:
  1. Check blood sugar before and after exercise. This shows you if the individual is at risk for hypoglycemia or how much exercise helps to improve blood sugar control. Improvement in glycemic control can motivate you to stick with a specific exercise or a specific time for exercise duration. Also, be sure to keep glucose tablets or juice boxes in your gym bag or locker so that you can correct an episode of low blood sugar, should it happen while exercising — and stop if a feeling of shakiness or anxiety is experienced.
  2. Start slowly. A gradual increase the intensity of the workout will ensure that as the individual becomes more fit, that individual is more likely to stick with the plan, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians.
  3. Choose an activity you like. An individual with diabetes is also be more likely to stick with an exercise plan if it's fun and invigorating and suits your

\*Corresponding author: Samuel Grossman, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist Department of Veterans Affairs, Instructor Skaggs School of Pharmacy of the University of Colorado, USA, Email: [Samuel.Grossman@va.gov](mailto:Samuel.Grossman@va.gov)

abilities. Also, try new activities to keep fitness fresh. If an individual with diabetes does not enjoy walking on a treadmill, for instance, it will be hard to step on it and stay on it every day.

4. Ask a friend or a group of friends to join you. Having someone to exercise with helps pass the time more quickly and makes the exercise more fun. Pick a partner who will hold you accountable and encourage you to show up for your exercise session. Just make sure the exercise partner or partners can tolerate the same exercise and that the exercise partner or partners are comfortable physically to exercise with that each other.
5. Reward yourself along the way. Celebrate milestones, such as after a goal has been met after one week, one month, two months, and so on. Celebration should include movies, concerts, or the favorite locations.
6. Workouts have to be scheduled in advance. In addition, you have to prepare for workouts in advance (prepare clothes,

have breakfast or a snack prepared prior to workout). Block out the time in your daily planner, especially if an individual is prone to letting the day get away from you. Seeing exercise on your daily to-do list reminds you that it's a priority.

7. There are many benefits to a workout including improvement in general health both physical and mental. In order to ensure the success of an exercise routine, individuals with diabetes have to follow steps so they can reap the benefits without the complications. Once an individual with diabetes start to see results of exercising regularly, he or she won't want to stop - and that's the greatest way to ensure motivation.

## References

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2. Fitness. American Diabetes Association.
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