



**Wolverhampton  
Diabetes Care**

# Exercise or Physical Activity and Diabetes

Physical activity and exercise are good for everyone including people with diabetes.

## What do we mean by exercise?

You should think of this as any extra activity you do above the normal day to day effort. It doesn't just mean jogging or going to the gym or anything dramatic. Physical activity can include gardening, brisk walking, cycling, swimming and dancing as well as playing sports.

## What are the benefits of exercise?

Physical activity helps bring down and control your blood sugars but there are many more advantages. Exercise can make you feel good, help you to control your weight, improve your circulation, lower your blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease, and reduce cholesterol and other fats in the blood.

## How much exercise should I do?

Thirty minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week can improve health. Moderate activity means enough to raise your heart beat and makes you feel warm and slightly- not uncomfortably- out of breath.

## How to get started?

If you want to be more active and are not used to exercising, it's a good idea to start gently and build up to what you want to do to improve your fitness. Remember, even really gentle exercise is good for you. Try to include more activity regularly in your everyday life. You may use stairs rather than lifts, walk a couple of bus stops or park further away from work or the shops. You could vary the type of activity each time to avoid getting bored. You can think of the best time of the day for activity, when your energy levels are highest.

## How does activity affect my diabetes?

Before you start any new activity, speak to your diabetes team about any action or adjustments you may need to make. Wear appropriate shoes and socks when exercising and check your feet for blisters or cuts after activity. See a chiropodist regularly. If your diabetes is treated with insulin you also need to monitor your blood glucose levels frequently. Delay activity if your blood glucose levels are higher than 15mmol/L, seek medical advice and do not exercise. If blood glucose levels are lower than 4mmol/L, have a sugary drink before you begin and monitor when you have finished. Activity will use more energy than usual and your blood glucose levels will fall. As the body restocks its fuel supplies, hypo may be more likely sometime later. Have starchy meals after activity and a snack before you go to bed to reduce the chance of low blood glucose levels while you sleep.

## How do I avoid hypos?

Carry dextrose tablets so that you can take them as soon as your blood glucose levels fall. Do not inject insulin into areas near to the muscles that you will be using during exercise. Always carry your diabetes ID card.

## Seeking advice and what care to expect

You should have full advice about blood testing, what the correct foods to eat are and when and how to adjust your treatment, especially insulin. You must know how to take care of hypos. If you already do exercise or you have a heavy manual job, or if you are starting up something new, then how to deal with your diabetes at that time should be worked through with you. Your medical team should give you clear advice if there are any risks to you from doing exercise. If you have problems with your diabetes during exercise your medical team will advise you how to put them right so that you can carry on and enjoy the sort of exercise that you want to do.