

# Don't Let the Idea of Exercise Stop You

## There are many ways to be active can help manage diabetes

Exercise can either be a welcomed activity or a dreaded task. Either way, it is important for good health – especially for people with diabetes. Being active provides big benefits, from lowering blood glucose (sugar), cholesterol, and blood pressure to helping with weight loss and improving mood. The good news is that even if you are not excited about exercise, there are many ways to be active. In addition to a balanced diet, regular activity is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy and help keep your diabetes in check.

- **Find your motivation** Figure out



what you want to achieve by staying active. Would you like to be able to play without losing your breath? Or lose weight, improve your blood glucose

level or have less pain? Whatever your goals, write them down. Make a note of things that are challenging for you now (getting out of a chair, climbing the stairs, running for the train or riding your bike to the store). After several weeks of being active, try that challenging activity again and it should be easier - proof that practice pays off. Don't get discouraged when you get out of a routine – it happens – just **pull out your list of goals** to remind yourself why you're doing this, and start again.

- **Be prepared** -As you get ready to become more active, **take precautions**. Be sure you wear



supportive and comfortable shoes and socks, keep your medical identification with you if you leave the house, and carry water. Since activity can affect your blood glucose, check it regularly and be prepared to manage low blood glucose by taking food – such as granola bars and glucose tablets. We can help you find ways to manage these issues, figure out what type of activity fits your lifestyle and plan how to best reach your goal.



- **Build over time** - If you're new to being active, **ease in to increased activity** so you don't overdo it and get overwhelmed.

Start by doing 5 or 10 minutes of activity at a time. Then try to add another 5 or 10 minutes every once in a while, working toward a goal of 150 minutes a week. That's less than 22 minutes a day! If you need directions to motivate you, ask us for help.

- **Avoid pain** - If an activity causes pain, **try**



**something else.**

If walking hurts your back or knee, ride a stationary bike, or consider water aerobics. We can suggest activities that can help you get in shape without pain.

- **Sneak in more activity** - Besides making a



commitment to regular exercise or activity, moving more **whenever and wherever** you can is a big help.

Instead of trying to carry everything upstairs at once, make several trips. Park your car at the farthest end of the lot when going shopping. Get off the bus one stop early. Walk through all of the aisles at the discount store, even if you only need a few items. Instead of calling or emailing a coworker, get up and walk over to their desk. Get the idea?

- **Track your progress** - Use a



calendar to **keep track** of when you are active and how long you exercise each time. You could also try wearing a monitor or pedometer to

keep track of your activity. Either way, it really feels good to see what you've accomplished. Turn it into a game by

challenging yourself to squeeze in more activity, whether spending an extra five minutes on the elliptical or taking more steps every day. When you accomplish a goal, treat yourself to a non-food reward such as a new piece of fitness clothing.



- **Think outside the box** - Do you find working out boring? Try watching

television, reading or listening to music while you exercise to help pass the time. If using equipment doesn't do it for you, **there are many other possibilities.** Garden, clean your house, walk the dog, go canoeing, go dancing, play a game with family or friends, walk in place or do chair exercises while you're watching television or maybe take a class (Zumba, weightlifting, water aerobics, etc.). Think about things you like to do, or something you want to try. Mix it up so you don't get bored.

- **Partner up** - One of the most



effective ways to stay on track is to **recruit a buddy.** Fitness is more fun, time goes faster and you can encourage each other

when you're working in a pair or group. If you can't find someone to work out with you, ask a family member or friend to check in with you regularly to see how you're doing to keep you accountable.