



Being Active with Diabetes: How to Get Started

Being active is important for staying healthy. When you have diabetes, exercise can help you:

- Control your blood sugar.
- Lower your blood pressure.
- Feel better and reduce stress.
- Lower your risk of heart disease.

Tips for daily exercise

It's best to choose an activity that you find simple, enjoyable, and easy to start so you can increase it each week. For many people with diabetes, walking is ideal. Depending on your health and fitness level, you might also try:

- Jogging
- Biking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Low-impact or chair aerobics
- Using an elliptical or step machine

When you begin any exercise, check your blood sugar often so you know how your body responds. You can also follow these tips for getting more physical activity into your day:

- Use an app or pedometer to keep track of your steps.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park further away from a store or your office.

Before starting physical activity

Some people with diabetes need to be careful before starting a new exercise program.

Here are some important things to keep in mind:

- Always carry fast-acting sugar sources such as a tube of glucose gel or 3 to 4 glucose tablets, identification, and your Medic-Alert bracelet, if you have one.
- Stop exercising right away if you're dizzy, short of breath, sick to your stomach, or in pain.
- Drink extra water before, during, and after exercise.
- Wear shoes and socks that fit well.

Low blood-sugar precautions

If you have type 1 diabetes or type 2 diabetes and take insulin or other medication, be sure to:

- Check your blood sugar before and after physical activity. If you use insulin to manage diabetes, talk to your care team about how you might adjust the amount.
- Eat an extra snack if needed and talk to your care team about what to eat if you exercise for long periods.
- Plan to be active an hour after eating a meal or snack to prevent low blood sugar, if you don't use insulin. If you have type 1 diabetes and your blood sugar is less than 120 before exercising, eat 15 to 30 grams of carbs before starting.

If you have type 1 diabetes and your blood sugar is over 250, use a urine test strip to check your urine for ketones (a sign that your body is using fat rather than glucose for energy) before exercising. Don't exercise if ketones are moderate or high.

Moderate to high activity levels can lower your blood sugar right away or up to 24 hours after exercise.

Tips to help you stick with exercise

- Make it as regular as sleeping and eating.
- Reward yourself when you reach a goal. Talk with friends, read a book, or listen to music.
- Mark it on your calendar. Or write it down on an activity goal sheet. (See the “Weekly Plan” below.)
- Switch it up if you get bored. Try different types of exercise on different days of the week.
- Buddy up with a friend or partner to help keep you motivated and make exercise more fun.
- Walk in place when it’s raining or cold. Or do stretches or an exercise video at home.

Weekly Plan

Use this Weekly Plan to set activity goals that you can easily reach.

This week, I will _____ (type of exercise)
_____ (for how long) _____ (when).

How confident am I that I can follow my plan?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not at all confident —————▶ Very confident

How I plan to reward myself:

We’re here to help

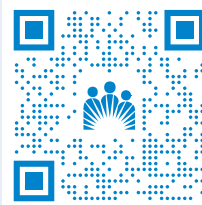
Learn more about diabetes and physical activity.



Live Well With Diabetes:
kpdoc.org/diabetes



Health Education:
kpdoc.org/healtheducation



This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.