

Keeping active

An essential part of managing diabetes



Introduction

Being active is good for all of us but it is especially important for people with diabetes. Physical activity, combined with healthy eating and insulin or diabetes medication that you might be taking, will help you to manage your diabetes and prevent long-term diabetes complications.

Being more physically active often conjures up images of gym memberships, long-distance runs and aerobics in a leotard, yet



this need not be the case. The great news is that you can become more active by making small changes to your lifestyle.

This leaflet offers you a chance to think about:

- why being more active should be important to you
- what might be getting in the way of you taking the plunge
- changes you can make to your daily routine.

If you have any concerns at all about becoming more active, never be afraid to ask for advice – your diabetes team is there to help.



Great news...

start with your daily routine, but do things in a more energetic way.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a common life-long condition where the amount of glucose in the blood is too high as the body cannot use it properly. This is because the pancreas does not produce any or not enough insulin or the insulin that is produced doesn't work properly (known as insulin resistance). Insulin helps glucose enter the body's cells, where it is used for energy.

Glucose comes from digesting carbohydrate from various kinds of food and drink, including starchy foods such as breads, rice and potatoes, fruit, some dairy products, sugar and other sweet foods. Glucose is also produced by the liver.

There are two main types of diabetes: Type 1 and Type 2.

Type 1 diabetes develops when the insulin-producing cells have been destroyed and the body is unable to produce any insulin. Usually it appears before the age of 40, and especially in childhood. It is treated with insulin either by injection or pump, a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

Type 2 diabetes develops when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin that is produced doesn't work properly. Usually it appears in people aged over 40, though in South Asian and Black people it can appear from the age of 25. It is becoming more common in children and young people of all ethnicities. Type 2 diabetes is treated with a healthy diet and regular physical activity, but medication and/or insulin is often required.

The main symptoms of undiagnosed diabetes include passing urine frequently (especially at night), increased thirst, extreme tiredness, unexplained weight loss, genital itching or regular episodes of thrush, slow healing of wounds and blurred vision.

The main aim of diabetes treatment is to achieve blood glucose, blood pressure and blood fat levels (including cholesterol) within the target ranges agreed by you and your healthcare team. This, together with a healthy lifestyle, will reduce the risk of developing the long-term complications of diabetes such as heart attack, stroke, amputation, blindness, kidney failure and nerve damage.

What makes activity important to you?

Many people enjoy being active not just for their health but because it makes them feel better and helps stop their weight creeping up. Being more active can also benefit the whole family. You may want to ask yourself what being more active means to you.

From the list below, think about which of these is important to you. Tick the boxes if you like.

The way you feel and look

Being more active could:	Tick here
• make me more mobile so that I can do more, like play with the children, climb the stairs, not get out of breath	
• make me feel happier and less stressed	
• make me feel better about myself	
• help me spend time with family, friends or meet more people	
• help me sleep better	
• change my body shape and help me get into my old clothes	
• mean more time for me away from my everyday life	
• make me feel more in control	
Why not add other benefits of your own here?	

Your health

Physical activity also has many other health benefits, some of which are highlighted below:

- improve your diabetes control and help prevent some of the complications of diabetes
- reduce the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke
- prevent and treat high blood pressure
- improve your blood fat levels including cholesterol
- strengthen your bones to help prevent osteoporosis (brittle bones)
- help treat arthritis and lower back pain
- benefits weight management, including weight loss, which helps all of the above.

So what's stopping you?

Now that you have thought about making changes to your lifestyle it is useful to consider what may get in the way. To help you plan for this you may find these comments useful, from people who have overcome their barriers to being more active.

"I don't have the time."

"With my hectic life it was hard to see how I could fit activity into my day. I now know the good news, that being active even for a short amount of time counts towards the daily target (see page 6). It's amazing where I can find 10 minutes – getting away from my desk at lunch, or dragging myself away from the TV."

"I'm too tired."

"My high blood glucose levels were making me feel really tired. Once I'd made the move to become more active I soon realised that it helped to get my blood glucose levels down resulting in me feeling less tired."

"I don't have anyone to go with."

"Joining in organised activities on my own was very daunting. I'm pleased I did it. Everyone is in the same boat. Now I've got a great group of friends who support and encourage me. There are also lots of activities I can do on my own."

"I can't afford it."

"Becoming more active doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. There are lots of free activities (see pages 6 & 7). I joined an exercise prescription scheme through my GP, which meant cheaper sessions."

"I don't like the idea of leotards and tights!"

"Being active doesn't have to be a fashion statement. Most types of moderate exercise that I do don't have to include anything more than a loose pair of trousers, a shirt and well fitting, comfortable shoes."

Is your reason here? If not, write it down and think of ideas how to overcome it.

What counts?

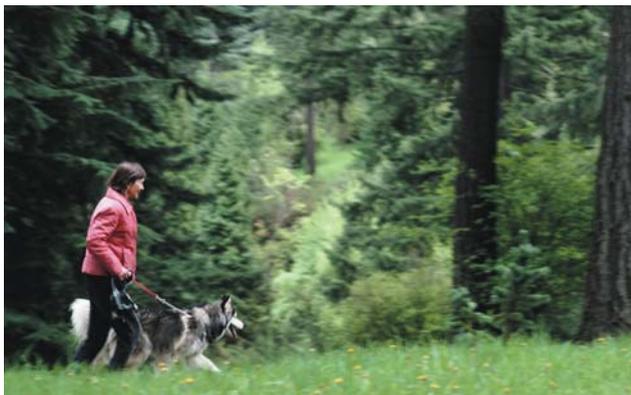
Every form of physical activity counts.

For general health, the recommended minimum amount of activity for:

- **adults** is 30 minutes on at least five days of the week
- **children** is one hour a day.

We are all recommended to achieve **at least 10,000 steps** a day – why not consider buying a pedometer to log how many steps you take?

It is recommended that this activity is at moderate intensity. This means an increase in breathing rate; an increase in heart rate - to the level where the pulse can be felt; and a feeling of increased warmth.



Good news...

activity can be spread out through the day into bite-size chunks.

Activities to get you started

It's important to find something that is enjoyable and achievable for you.

Pick and mix from the list below:

- **Walking** – there are lots of ways to include more walking in your everyday life.
 - Instead of meeting friends or family for a coffee why not suggest a walk or a trip to the shops?
 - Avoid the traffic and leave the car at home for small trips.
 - Get off the bus or train one or two stops earlier and walk the rest of the way.
 - Park your car in the furthest spot in the car park.
 - Instead of sitting at your desk in your lunch break go out and take a walk.
 - Offer to take a friend's dog for a walk.
 - Use the stairs instead of taking the lift.
- **Dancing** – is becoming a more popular way to keep active and can be a great way to meet people. Why not try salsa, ceroc, belly dancing, Bhangra or even Bollywood dancing?
- **Swimming** – is a great way to relax but if you want more fun water aerobics might be just up your street. Most leisure facilities offer women-only sessions too.
- **Household jobs** –
 - Get fit while sprucing up your garden.
 - Boogie while you're Hoovering.
 - Doing DIY leads to health as well as home improvement.
- **Golf** – walking briskly between 18 holes can really notch up some physical activity minutes and help you forget everyday stresses.
- **Join in with the kids** – enjoy some fun with the children and join in with their activities, such as kicking a ball around the park – or what about rollerblading?
- **Bowling** – walking the green or knocking down pins.
- **Cycling** – a great way to explore the countryside.



Remember...
all activity counts!

Top tips for being active

- ✓ You can achieve the recommended level of activity through several bouts of 10 minutes or more if you prefer.
- ✓ Set yourself daily, weekly and monthly goals or targets.
- ✓ Try keeping a physical activity diary to monitor your progress and reward yourself for achieving your goals.
- ✓ Introduce changes to avoid boredom setting in and don't be afraid to try new activities.
- ✓ Despite your body benefiting as soon as you become more active, you may not see visible changes straight away. After a few weeks the benefits will become more noticeable to you.
- ✓ Regular habits included in your daily routine are easier to achieve.
- ✓ Find an activity you enjoy and you will be more likely to keep it up. Better still, try taking up an activity the whole family or your friends can enjoy.



Have fun...

do things you enjoy, which suit you and your lifestyle.

Just before you start...

Diabetes does not mean that you can't become more active. However, it does mean that there are a few things to think about before you start, like monitoring your blood glucose levels, your diabetes treatment, and the possibility of having a hypo.

Before you start any new activity talk to your doctor, especially if you:

- are taking any medication for diabetes or heart disease
- have any complications of diabetes like foot or eye problems
- are not sure which activities suit you
- have any conditions that may restrict your mobility or ability to be active, eg high blood pressure, angina, osteoporosis, asthma or have had a heart attack. Your healthcare team can advise you about what activities are suitable for your condition.



Think...

you may need to talk to your diabetes team once you are active on a regular basis, in case your diabetes medication needs to be adjusted.

About Diabetes UK

Diabetes UK is the charity for people with diabetes, their family, friends and carers. Our mission is to improve the lives of people with the condition and work towards a future without diabetes.

Diabetes UK stands up for the interests of people with diabetes by campaigning for better standards of care. We are one of the main funders of diabetes research in the UK which includes research into cause and prevention, care and treatment and finding a cure. We provide practical support and information and safety-net services to help people manage their diabetes.

Did you know?

There are 2.5 million people in the UK diagnosed with diabetes and up to 500,000 people that have the condition but don't know it.

- Our website www.diabetes.org.uk has over 5,000 visitors a day.
- We have a **network of offices throughout the UK** – see back cover.
- Diabetes UK Careline staff answer **over 100 enquiries a day**.
- We fund more than **£7 million a year on diabetes research**.
- We produce a wide range of **magazines, books and leaflets** covering all aspect of diabetes.



All of this and more is made possible through donations, fundraising and membership of Diabetes UK.

How can you help?

You can be actively involved in the work Diabetes UK does. For details call **020 7424 1000** or visit our website about:

Diabetes Campaigners Network – www.diabetes.org.uk/campaigns

Fundraising ideas and events – www.diabetes.org.uk/fundraise

Make a donation – www.diabetes.org.uk/donate

Become a Supporting Member today; your support will make a real difference



Join our team and help us get closer to a future free from diabetes while improving the lives of everyone living with diabetes, including your own.

Enjoy the benefits of being a Supporting Member

Being a Diabetes UK Supporting Member entitles you to a range of benefits including:

- exclusive personalised Supporting Members area on our website
- our bi-monthly magazine *Balance*
- access to experienced counsellors on our confidential Diabetes UK Careline
- a wealth of reliable and expert publications on diabetes
- opportunities to make new friends living with the same condition as you
- the latest updates and developments about diabetes from our researchers.

To join visit www.diabetes.org.uk/join

or call free on **0800 138 5605**

For more information call our Supporter Services team on **0845 123 2399** during office hours.

Diabetes UK

National and regional offices

Central Office	Telephone 020 7424 1000
Diabetes UK Cymru	Telephone 029 2066 8276
Diabetes UK Northern Ireland	Telephone 028 9066 6646
Diabetes UK Scotland	Telephone 0141 332 2700
Diabetes UK Eastern	Telephone 020 7424 1000
Diabetes UK East Midlands	Telephone 0115 950 7147
Diabetes UK London	Telephone 020 7424 1116
Diabetes UK Northern & Yorkshire	Telephone 01325 488606
Diabetes UK North West	Telephone 01925 653281
Diabetes UK South East	Telephone 020 7424 1000
Diabetes UK South West	Telephone 01823 324007
Diabetes UK West Midlands	Telephone 01922 614500

Visit www.diabetes.org.uk/in_your_area/ for email addresses

Useful contacts

Become a member	Telephone 0800 138 5605
Customer Services	Telephone 0845 123 2399
Diabetes UK Careline (or if hearing impaired)	Telephone 0845 120 2960* Textphone 020 7424 1031
Publications orderline	Telephone 0800 585 088

Visit www.diabetes.org.uk for further information

***Diabetes UK Careline** is here to help. Call **0845 120 2960** for support and information (although unable to provide individual medical advice). Calls cost no more than 4p per minute. Calls from mobiles usually cost more.



The charity for people with diabetes

Macleod House, 10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA

Telephone 020 7424 1000 **Fax** 020 7424 1001

Email info@diabetes.org.uk

Website www.diabetes.org.uk

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