

Let's Talk About...

Diabetes, exercise, and sports

It's important to exercise if you have diabetes. Activities like sports and dance can help keep your blood glucose under control and help you feel better overall.

What kind of exercise should I do?

The best exercise for your heart is aerobic exercise. This exercise includes walking, running, playing basketball, dancing or riding your bike — anything that makes your heart beat faster and your lungs work harder. Try to do at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise at a time.

You should also work on your muscle strength 2–3 times each week. Exercises like push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups help you stay strong.

How much exercise do I need?

Most kids should get at least 1 hour of physical activity each day. You don't have to do it all at once, and it doesn't have to come from scheduled exercise sessions. You can work activity into your day by:

- Riding a bike or walking to school
- Going to PE class
- Playing outside after school
- Joining an after-school sport or activity
- Doing push-ups or jumping jacks during commercials when watching TV
- Playing active video games with friends and family

The point is to keep moving and fight the harmful effects of sitting all day.

How do I exercise safely with diabetes?

To exercise safely:

- Check your blood glucose before, during, and after exercise. Exercise often causes blood glucose levels to drop, so you need to balance snacks, insulin,



and exercise to stay in your target range. Regular blood glucose checks help you see how exercise changes your levels. Once you figure out how your body responds to exercise, you may not need to check as often.

- **Before exercise:** If blood glucose is below your target range, eat a carbohydrate snack before you start to exercise. **DO NOT** take insulin with your snack.
- **During exercise:** Check blood glucose levels every 30–45 minutes while exercising (if you can). If you're exercising hard, check your levels more often. Eat quick-energy, low-fat snacks when needed to keep your blood glucose within range.
- **After exercise:** Your blood glucose levels may continue to drop for several hours after your activity is over. Keep checking your glucose levels every 2–3 hours for 6–8 hours after exercise if low levels continue. This is especially important when starting a new activity. Snack as needed to keep your levels where they need to be.

- **Carry water and a quick-energy snack.** Drink a lot of water while you exercise. It's easy to get dehydrated. Keep glucose tablets or other quick-energy snacks (granola bars, 100% fruit juice, or gummy fruit snacks) with you always. Use them to prevent or treat low blood glucose.
- **Sit out if you need to.** DON'T EXERCISE if your blood glucose is higher than 300 mg/dL and you have ketones in your urine. When your glucose is that high, exercise may make it go higher. However, if you don't have ketones, exercise may help lower your blood glucose.

What and how much should I eat before exercise?

The table below shows how much you should eat before exercise, depending on your blood glucose. Drink plenty of fluids before and during exercise. You may also need to use less insulin. People with diabetes who don't exercise regularly may need to eat more carbohydrates during exercise.

Length and type of exercise you're planning	Blood glucose level	Grams of carbohydrates to eat before exercise
15–30 minutes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk half a mile • Riding a bicycle slowly for less than 30 minutes 	less than 80 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade® or 8 ounces milk or ½ sandwich)
	80–150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk or ½ sandwich)
	more than 150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing
30 minutes up to 2 hours		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shooting baskets • Swimming laps slowly • Mowing the lawn • Bicycling • Walking or light hiking 	less than 80 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk plus ½ sandwich for the other 15 grams)
	80–150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk plus ½ sandwich for the other 15 grams)
	more than 150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk or ½ sandwich)
2–4 hours		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running long distance • Dancing or aerobics • Playing football • Playing a basketball game • Swimming 	less than 80 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade plus a whole sandwich)
	80–150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk plus ½ sandwich for the other 15 grams)
	more than 150 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15–30 grams of carbohydrates (Examples: 4 ounces juice or 8 ounces Gatorade or 8 ounces milk or ½ sandwich)

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