

## What kind of activity is best?

Both aerobic and resistance exercise are important for people living with diabetes.

### Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise is continuous exercise such as walking, bicycling or jogging that elevates breathing and heart rate.

### Resistance exercise

Resistance exercise involves brief repetitive exercises with weights, weight machines, resistance bands or one's own body weight to build muscle strength. If you decide to begin resistance exercise, you should first get some instruction from a qualified exercise specialist, a diabetes educator or exercise resource (such as a video or brochure) and start slowly.

### Interval training

Interval training involves short periods of vigorous exercise such as running or cycling, alternating with 30 second to 3 minute recovery periods at low-to-moderate intensity or, rest.

## Why is activity so important for people with diabetes?

Almost everyone, whether or not they have diabetes, benefits from regular exercise. Well-known health benefits include weight loss, stronger bones, improved blood pressure control, lower rates of heart disease and cancer as well as increased energy levels.

Regular exercise also has special advantages if you have type 2 diabetes. Regular physical activity improves your body's sensitivity to insulin and helps manage your blood sugar levels.

## Safety first

- If you have been inactive for some time, talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program that is more strenuous than brisk walking.
- Make sure you wear comfortable, proper-fitting shoes.
- Wear your MedicAlert® bracelet or necklace.
- Listen to your body. Speak to your doctor if you are very short of breath or have chest pain.
- If you take insulin or medications that increase insulin levels, monitor your blood sugar before, during and many hours after your activity to see how it affects your blood sugar levels.
- Carry some form of fast-acting carbohydrate with you in case you need to treat low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), for example, glucose tablets or Life Savers®.
- If you live with type 1 diabetes, speak to your health-care provider about additional strategies to reduce the risk of hypoglycemia during and after exercise.

	Minutes	Times per week
My plan for aerobic exercise is :		
My plan for resistance exercise is :		



## How much is enough?

Your goal should be to complete **at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week**, (e.g. 30 minutes, 5 days a week).

You may have to start slowly, with as little as 5 to 10 minutes of exercise per day, gradually building up to your goal. The good news, though, is that multiple, shorter exercise sessions of at least 10 minutes, adding up to 90-140 minutes per week, can have some benefits for people with diabetes. As you begin your exercise program and continue to build on it, be sure that you have no more than 2 consecutive days without exercise.

If you are able and when you are ready, try adding **resistance exercises like lifting weights 2-3 times a week**.

When you add resistance exercise, you should get some help from a qualified exercise specialist.

Note: You may consider **interval training** to increase improvements in fitness levels for type 2 diabetes, and to lower the risk of hypoglycemia in type 1 diabetes. Speak with your health-care provider or qualified exercise specialist if you plan to start interval training.

## Keep going!

Habits can be hard to change, so be prepared with a plan in case your motivation starts to fade:

- Do something you like! It is hard to stick to an activity that is not fun. It may take you a few tries before you find the activity that is right for you.
- Have a support network. Ask your family, friends and co-workers to help you stay motivated by joining you for a walk or a workout at the gym.
- Set small, attainable goals and celebrate when you reach them. Reward yourself in healthy ways.
- Add physical activity to your daily routine. While you are working or watching TV, get up every 20-30 minutes.
- Seek professional help from a personal trainer, or someone knowledgeable who can help you find a fitness regimen that will work for you.
- Using a step monitor (pedometer or accelerometer) can be helpful to track your activity.

Physical activity and diabetes can be a complex issue. For more information, talk to your health-care team or visit [diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca).

Regardless of your age, making the decision to become more physically active is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and the people who love you. Take that first step today!



**Related articles:** *Benefits of physical activity, Planning for regular physical activity, Introductory resistance program, Maintaining aerobic exercise, and Resistance exercise guidelines*

**DIABETES  
CANADA**

[diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca) | **1-800 BANTING (226-8464)** | [info@diabetes.ca](mailto:info@diabetes.ca)

Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Eleven million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and, funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

This document reflects the 2018 Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines © 2018 The Canadian Diabetes Association. The Canadian Diabetes Association is the registered owner of the name Diabetes Canada. 112026 04/18