

FOR  
PATIENTS



## HELPING TO MANAGE YOUR TYPE 2 DIABETES THROUGH DIET AND EXERCISE

It's hard to believe that a phrase as simple as "eating better and moving more" can have such an impact on your diabetes. But it does.

**Studies have shown that even a 5% loss in body weight can help.** That weight loss can lead to less insulin resistance, improved blood glucose (A1C) levels, and lower blood pressure and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.

**The same holds true with exercise.** Other studies found that 8 or more weeks of moderate exercise helps reduce A1C blood sugar levels—at any weight. This means that a brisk walk on a flat surface, water aerobics, or riding on a stationary bicycle only 20 to 30 minutes a day may help keep your blood sugar more balanced.

Of course eating right and exercising are easier said than done. Here are some tips to help you stay on track to manage your type 2 diabetes (T2D) along with taking the medication your doctor prescribes.

### Healthy eating

- **Eat regular meals.** Eating every 4 to 5 hours can help manage blood sugar. Talk to your case manager about finding a dietitian and/or choosing a meal plan that will work best for you and your lifestyle
- **Eat a variety of healthy foods**, such as fruits and vegetables. Be adventurous. Eat a fruit or vegetable you've never tried before. You may like it!
- **Eat less fat.** That means avoiding fried foods, fatty meats, and high-fat creams and yogurts. Instead, think baked, broiled, grilled, boiled, or steamed
- **Eat less sugar.** You may find that eating less sugar helps you manage your blood glucose levels. How can you stay away from sugary foods? Eat whole-grain breads, beans, fruits, and vegetables. Drink water and other drinks that have no added sugar. As tempting as they are, stay away from cookies, cakes, candy, brownies, and sugary breakfast cereals. Your case manager and/or dietitian can give you tips on ways to sweeten food and drinks without using sugar



- **Watch the salt shaker.** Using less salt may help manage your blood pressure. Try herbs and spices instead of salt to season your food. And always taste your food before heading for the salt; you might not need any
- **Limit how much alcohol you drink.** It can cause health problems, especially in people with diabetes. Alcohol adds empty calories, and it may create dangerous reactions with the medicines you take. Your blood glucose can go down too low if you drink beer, wine, or liquor on an empty stomach
- **Get in touch with your appetite.** Before you start to eat, take a moment to ask yourself if you are truly hungry. Sometimes we use food as a way of feeling better if we are sad, anxious, or bored. Emotional eating can sabotage any well-meaning diet. Try distracting yourself with a call or an e-mail to a friend. Take a bath. Do a few yoga stretches.

## Get moving!

- **Start slowly.** Don't think a 10K marathon the first time you put your sneakers on to take a walk. If it's been a while since you've been physically active, talk to your case manager or other members of your health care team about good ways to start. As you become stronger, you can add a few extra minutes
- **Pain is no gain.** If you start to feel any pain, stop and wait for it to go away. If your pain returns, talk to your case manager or other members of your health care team right away
- **Do some physical activity every day.** It's better to walk 10 or 20 minutes every day than 1 hour once a week
- **Choose an activity you enjoy.** If you hate walking, chances are you won't stay with it longer than a few days. If the thought of dancing reminds you of your 2 left feet, leave the dance floor to someone else. Do an activity you really like. The more fun it is, the more likely you will do it each day
- **Think partner.** If possible, try to exercise with a family member or a friend. It will help keep you motivated on the days you don't want to move, plus the conversation will help make the minutes fly

**Lifestyle management is an important part of your diabetes program. Exercise and diet go hand-in-hand with the medication you're also taking to help ensure your blood sugar levels remain balanced.**

• **Break through barriers to activity.** Excuses. We've all heard them; we've all used them. Here are some of the more common ones—and the positive self-talk you can give yourself to overcome them:

— **“I don't have time to exercise.”** Maybe you can't block out 20 or 30 minutes every day. But what about 10 minutes 3 times a day? Breaking your exercise time into smaller segments can help you reach your exercise goals more easily

— **“I've never been active and don't know where to start.”** Don't discount your everyday activities. Housework? Raking leaves? Carrying grocery bags? These all count as “being active”

— **“I'm too tired after work to start exercising.”** There's always the morning before work—or lunch time. And on the plus side: the more you exercise, the more energy you'll have, and you just might not be too tired to exercise after your work day is over!

— **“I'm too shy to join a gym or take an exercise class.”** No problem. Try following an aerobics class on TV or DVD or simply take a walk around the block

— **“I'm afraid my blood glucose level will drop too low.”** If you have diabetes and are taking insulin, this may be a real concern. Talk to your physician about ways to exercise safely. If you have T2D and aren't taking insulin, it's still a good idea to be prepared. Make sure you have a regular (not diet) exercise drink, fruit juice, glucose tablets, hard candy, or raisins handy to treat low blood sugar if symptoms should occur. Wearing a diabetes ID is another important safety precaution

**Examples of moderate-level physical activities\***

Common chores	Activities
Raking leaves	Brisk walking
Gardening	Bicycle riding
Pushing a stroller 1½ miles	Water aerobics
Stair walking for 15 minutes	Swimming laps for 20 minutes
Washing and waxing a car for 45-60 minutes	Playing basketball for 15-20 minutes
Shoveling snow for 15 minutes	Jumping rope for 15 minutes

\*Activities are 30 minutes total except where indicated.

**For additional resources, ask your case manager.**