

TIP: Focus on overall activity rather than a particular routine.

Exercise for diabetics

People with diabetes are encouraged to exercise regularly for better blood sugar control and to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases. The reason for this is that muscles which are working use more glucose than those that are resting.



Exercising with another person pushes you to do your workout and do it to the best of your ability. Also, if you work out with a friend who is stronger or faster than you, you will be more likely to test your own limits. COURTESY PHOTO

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Diabetes is a chronic disease associated with abnormally high levels of sugar in the blood. This comes about because the pancreas fails to produce enough insulin, thereby causing Type 1 diabetes or because of inadequate sensitivity of cells to insulin causing Type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes strikes people of all ages, it thwarts the body's ability

to use the carbohydrates in food for energy, resulting in elevated blood sugar. This excess sugar raises the risk for heart disease, loss of vision, nerve and organ damage, sexual dysfunction and other serious conditions.

Prevention and management of diabetes is hinged more on following feeding instructions, prescribed medication and exercises according to Joel Cosmas Oryem, the manager physical rehabilitation services at Metroplex Medical centre, Aga Khan

University Hospital Uganda.

Why exercise?

Moderate physical activity performed regularly reduces the incidence of diabetes in people predisposed to diabetes. For example, people with gestational diabetes or with family history of diabetes to manage weight and regulate fat levels.

Exercises will help you reduce fat percentage and manage body weight, facilitate glucose control by

WHEN TO EXERCISE

According to Catherine Nanozi, a nutritionist, it is important to note, however that exercises do not control glucose levels and proper timing is needed with insulin intake and avoiding heavy exercises before going for bed is recommended.

People with type 1 diabetes (insulin dependent diabetes) should never exercise when their glucose level is below 100mg/dl or above 250mg/dl or immediately after an insulin injection.

Oryem says, "If you already have foot problems such as loss of sensation, weight bearing exercises like running, prolonged walking, jogging and jumping should be avoided, instead walking, biking, swimming, exercises are encouraged."

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GLUCOSE LEVEL BELOW WHICH A PERSON WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES IS NOT ALLOWED TO EXERCISE.



improving the body's sensitivity to insulin and will increase the glucose transporting factors as well as reduce stress.

"The exercises, therefore, improve the body's use of insulin and lower blood sugar levels in people with Type 2 diabetes. Being active also helps reduce body fat, lower blood pressure, and protect against heart disease and relieves stress," Oryem says.

Type of exercise

Oryem recommends warm ups of about 10 minutes. "The exercises can be increased gradually for more minutes up to an hour a day with a target to increase the heart rate. This involves all muscles of the legs and arms.

The forms of exercises for diabetics may include agility and mobility exercises. These include walking, jogging, running, cycling and swimming among others.

"Exercises such as stretching offer flexibility of soft tissues. Relaxation exercises to manage stress include deep breathing exercises, positioning and proper posture techniques, sustained positional stretches are good for diabetics," Oryem recommends.

He, however, warns that, "Muscle strengthening exercises such as hill walking, cycling, dance, push-ups, sit-ups and squats should be done at least twice a week but stretching and relaxation can be done daily. Exercises must be regular because halting for over a week will reverse the good effects."

Always carry a source of ready glucose such as a fruit or a bottle of juice before exercising and keep properly hydrated by taking lots of fluids and water.

Oryem warns diabetics against doing strenuous exercises because these are likely to cause a drop in glucose levels (Hypoglycaemia).

Foot wear

Appropriate foot wear is needed during the exercise. A well-fitting and cushioned shoe with insoles of silica gel or air, soft rubber soles and well aerated is recommended to protect the feet from any damage.