

# Life *with* Diabetes



A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM UPPER CHESAPEAKE HEALTH

## In Motion

Exercise does not need to be the enemy. You can earn the benefits of being physically active without going to a gym, playing sports or using fancy equipment. When you're physically fit, you have the strength, flexibility, and endurance needed for your daily activities. Being physically active helps you feel better physically and mentally, and for individuals with diabetes, exercise can be essential for keeping your blood glucose in check. In this issue, we cover two physical activity topics from the American Diabetes Association: one on the benefits of staying active and one on overcoming the barriers to exercise.

### Top 10 Benefits of Being Active

- 1 Improves blood glucose management. Activity makes your body more sensitive to the insulin you make. Activity also burns glucose (calories). Both actions lower blood glucose.
- 2 Lowers blood pressure. Activity helps your heart pump stronger and slower.
- 3 Improves cholesterol levels. Exercise can raise good cholesterol (HDL) and lower bad cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides.
- 4 Take less insulin or diabetes pills. Activity can lower blood glucose and weight. Both of these may lower how much insulin or diabetes pills you need to take.
- 5 Lose weight and keep it off. Activity burns calories. If you burn enough calories, you'll trim a few pounds. Stay active and you'll keep the weight off.
- 6 Lower risk for other health problems. Reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke, some cancers, and bone loss.
- 7 Gain more energy and sleep better. You'll get better sleep in less time and have more energy, too.
- 8 Relieve stress. Work out or walk off daily stress.
- 9 Build stronger bones and muscles. Weight-bearing activities, such as walking, make bones stronger. Strength-training activities, such as lifting light weights (or even cans of beans), make muscles strong.
- 10 Become more flexible.

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## Overcoming Barriers to Being Active

How do I get past the barriers to being physically active? If you're not active, it's likely that you have at least one reason why. Perhaps you've never been very active. Maybe you're afraid exercise will cause your glucose level to drop too low. Think about what's keeping you from being active and then look into ways to overcome the barriers.

Barrier	Solution
I don't have time to exercise for 30 minutes a day.	Do as much as you can. Every step counts. If you're just starting out, start with 10 minutes a day and add more time little by little. Work up to 10 minutes at a time, three times a day.
I'm too tired after work.	Plan to do something active before work or during the day.
I don't have the right clothes.	Wear anything that's comfortable as long as you have shoes that fit well and socks that don't irritate your skin.
I'm too shy to exercise in a group.	Choose an activity you can do on your own, such as following along with an aerobics class on TV or going for a walk.
I don't want to have sore muscles.	Exercise shouldn't hurt if you go slowly at first. Choose something you can do without getting sore. Learn how to warm up and stretch before you do something active and how to cool down afterward.
I'm afraid I'll get low blood glucose.	If you're taking a medication that could cause low blood glucose, talk to your health care provider about ways to exercise safely.
Walking hurts my knees.	Try chair exercises or swimming.
It's too hot outside.	If it's too hot, too cold or too humid, walk inside a school or a shopping center.
It's not safe to walk in my neighborhood.	Find an indoor activity, such as an exercise class at a community center.
I'm afraid I'll make my condition worse.	Get a checkup before planning your fitness routine. Learn what's safe for you to do.
I can't afford to join a fitness center or buy equipment.	Do something that doesn't require fancy equipment, such as walking or using cans of food for weights.
Exercise is boring.	Find something you enjoy doing. Try different activities on different days.





## Carbohydrates & Diabetes

A low-carbohydrate, Mediterranean-style diet is more effective than a typical low-fat, calorie-restricted diet for diabetes management, according to a recent study.

Understanding the effect of carbohydrates on blood glucose levels is key to managing diabetes. The carbohydrate in food makes blood glucose levels go up.

The key to keeping blood glucose levels at your goal is to balance the food you eat with your physical activity and any pills or insulin you take. If you eat more carbohydrates than usual, you can expect your blood glucose levels to be higher than usual. Likewise, if you eat less, you can expect your blood glucose levels to be lower. Finding the balance for yourself is important so you can feel your best, do the things you enjoy, and lower your risk of diabetes complications.

There are three main types of carbohydrates in food. They are starch, sugar and dietary fiber. Starch and sugar both raise blood glucose levels. Carbohydrate rich foods are:

- Beans and legumes
- Grains
- Starchy vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy products
- Sweets and snack foods

Meal planning for diabetes is more than just cutting back on starch or sugar. There are many options that people with diabetes use to help them plan their meals. Having diabetes doesn't have to mean eating the same foods day after day. By choosing the right meal planning tool for you, you'll be able to try new foods and enjoy your favorites. A registered dietitian can help you find the meal plan that works best for you.

## Small Steps for Your Health

There are many things the “experts” tell us to do to prevent diabetes complications or type 2 diabetes: choose healthy foods ... make healthy meals ... be active 30 minutes a day. But where should you start?

It's not easy to do all of this every day living in today's fast-paced and fast-food world. And it can be even harder if you have a lot of changes you want to make.

**One Step at a Time** — It's easier to make lifestyle changes over months and years. Think of each small step as one piece of your effort to change your habits.

**Bad habits?** — Accept that you have bad habits you need to change. If you believe you have a problem, you will probably succeed in making some changes.

**Ready, Willing and Able** — To succeed at making lifestyle changes, the change must be important to you. For example, maybe you want to live long enough to see your grandchildren grow up. You must have more reasons to change than reasons not to change.

**Pick and Choose** — Take what you want to do and break it down into small steps. Then think about a few things you are ready, willing, and able to change. Leave other habits that you don't feel ready to change for another time.

**Take a Look** — Think about your current habits. How active are you? Pick some changes that you want to do the most and that will make the biggest impact. For example, take 15 minute break from the TV and go for a walk.

**Setting Goals** — For each goal, think about four things: How long will you try to reach this goal? Keep it short. How often will you do this? Is it easy to do in your regular daily life? Keep it realistic. Is it limited in scope? Be specific. Set 1 to 3 goals at a time. For example: for the next month (how long), four days each week (how often) I will take a 15 minute walk after lunch three days a week (realistic and specific).

**How Did You Do?** — Once the time you set is over, look at the goals you set. Did you succeed? Did you set your sights too high? Did something happen in your life to keep you from being successful? If you were successful, give yourself a BIG pat on the back (or maybe a trip to the movies!). Wait, you are not done! Making a change for two weeks or a month does not mean that it will stick for life. It's so easy to slip back to your old ways. Practice the new habits faithfully.

What you eat is one of the most important aspects of managing diabetes. Don't fight against good nutrition. Find tips and ideas to make healthful eating a part of your busy lifestyle.

## Simple Dinner Recipe

Here's a healthy and nutritious, 30 minute recipe consisting of boiled potatoes, vegetables, and an omelette. A typical everyday dinner recipe across towns and villages of Catalonia, Spain. As the proverb says: Eat boiled vegetables and you'll live a long life.

### Verdura - Dinner vegetables

Simple dinner recipe seasoned with olive oil and salt

#### Ingredients for this simple dinner recipe

- 1-quart water
- 4 medium-sized potatoes, about 1 1/4 pounds - peeled and quartered
- 1 pound Italian flat beans or green beans - caps snapped and broken in half
- 2 medium size onions - peeled and cut in half
- 3 medium carrots, about 1/2 pound - cut into 1.5 inch pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil and salt for seasoning



#### What basic cookware do you need for this vegetable recipe?

- A large deep pot
- An omelette pan of 5 to 6 inches
- A colander

#### Preparation of this simple dinner recipe

1. Peel the potatoes put them in a colander and wash them under cold water. Quarter them. The pieces should be rather big, of about 1.5 to 2 inches.
2. Peel the onions cut them by half and set aside in the colander.
3. Wash the green beans under water, snap or cut off the stem ends, and break or cut them in half. Set them aside in the colander with the onions.
4. Drop the potatoes in a deep pot with the quart cold water. Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes depending on how hard they are.
5. In the meantime scrub the carrots under cold running water. Trim the ends and cut them into 1.5 inch pieces. Don't cut carrots until ready to use, because carrots tend to oxidize quickly. When the potatoes come to a boil, add the carrots and cover.
6. After 3 minutes, add the onion halves and the green beans and cover. Bring to a boil and uncover so that the beans keep its intense green color. After 5 minutes add salt, and continue cooking for 5 more minutes.
7. Test the potatoes with a pointed knife. Taste the green beans. If the potatoes are tender, and the green beans crispy, drain all ingredients in a colander.
8. In the meantime, begin making a plain omelette for each guest with 1 or 2 eggs each, depending on how hungry you are, and place them on a plate.
9. Serves 4. Serve straight away together with the omelettes. Traditionally every guest seasons to taste his/her potatoes and the vegetables with olive oil and a pinch of salt.

## Six Holiday Tips

Food is often the center or at least a part of every holiday celebration. An evening get together with friends is no different. Finding healthy and delicious appetizers used to be a challenge, but not anymore! The tips below can help guide you through your next evening event.

- 1 **Eat what you like.** Instead of worrying about what will be served, offer to bring an appetizer or dish that you know you and others will enjoy.
- 2 **It's a party, but don't overdo it.** Plan to enjoy the food! If the food will be available near your usual meal time, you're in luck. Try to eat about the same amount of carbohydrate that you normally would for a meal. If you plan to have a sweet, watch the starchy foods and allow for a small piece of your favorite. Keep the portions small.
- 3 **Eat before you eat.** It's best to have a little something to eat before the party so you aren't famished when you arrive, and tempted to really overdo. This can also serve as a snack at your usual meal time if the party is later in the evening.
- 4 **Focus on reconnecting with friends and family instead of the food.** Once you've eaten, station yourself away from the tempting bowl of chocolates or nuts.
- 5 **Drink in moderation.** If you drink alcohol, remember to eat something first to prevent low blood glucose levels later. Keep it to no more than 1 drink for women and 2 drinks for men.
- 6 **If you overindulge, get back on track the next morning.** Include extra exercise, monitor your blood glucose levels, and get back on track with your usual eating habits.



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