

## Diabetes and physical activity

Physical activity is the cornerstone for both preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes and managing type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Staying active can help you to manage your diabetes effectively and keep you healthy.

### How does physical activity help?

Physical activity can help you improve your:



**Blood sugar**



**Blood pressure**



**Body weight**



**Mood**

Regular physical activity has been proven to improve your sense of wellbeing. It can help you reduce stress levels and help you sleep better.

### What kind of physical activity is best?

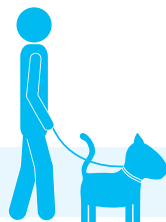
Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, Marae activities, dancing and mowing the lawns all count.



OR



You can also snack on activity – you don't have to do it all at once. Three brisk walks for 10 minutes in the day may be more manageable than one of 30 minutes.



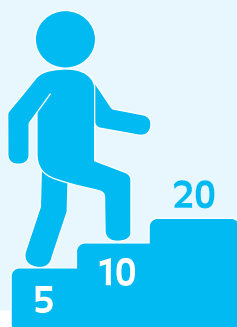
## How do I get started?

If you are not yet physically active, it's important to start slowly. If you are an older person, or you've had diabetes for more than five years, or you have any existing diabetes complications visit your doctor before you start.

Your doctor will discuss the benefits of being physically active with you. If you would like support with becoming active, ask your doctor or nurse to give you a Green Prescription, or phone **0800 ACTIVE (0800 228 483)**.

Whatever activity you choose, start small and build up slowly. If you choose walking, start with five minutes a day. Set a small goal each day that you can achieve. Build up your time every few days until you can manage longer walks.

Seek medical help if you have any pain, dizziness or shortness of breath when you are active. These symptoms can be a warning that something may be wrong.



## How do I stick to regular physical activity?

Find something you enjoy that fits with your lifestyle. Many people prefer activities with a purpose, such as walking to work, walking the dog or gardening.

Plan your activity at a time that works for you. If you aim to walk in the evening, but keep putting it off because you are too tired, try the morning when you are fresh.

Combine your activity with something else you enjoy. If you like being social, go to aerobics, join a kapa haka group or try a dance class. Walk with your co-workers at lunchtime or your family and whanau, or friends in the weekend. If you like to have time out alone, use physical activity to enjoy some active time alone.

Always keep in mind your goal of increasing physical activity. Use every opportunity. Use the stairs instead of the lift, walk briskly to the shop, walk the kids to school – use every opportunity, every time, to stay active.

Many people have ups and downs when starting new habits. Turn any setback around. Use it as a learning experience. Work out what stopped you, so that you stay on track next time. It's all part of planning.

Congratulate yourself. You are planning goals and working to achieving them. Through doing this you are setting a good example for your family, whanau, children and friends.

## What if I'm on insulin or tablets?

If you take insulin or some of the diabetes tablets, learn about 'hypos' or low blood sugars. When you are physically active you are more prone to having low blood sugar levels.

Don't let this put you off. Ask your doctor or diabetes nurse to help you avoid low blood sugars.

Always carry some glucose tablets and a small snack when being active. Then if your blood sugar does go low, you will be able to treat it. Carry some identification or medic alert identification stating you have diabetes and what medication you take.

Diabetes New Zealand is a leading national organisation and registered charity. Our aim is to support all people affected by diabetes to live well through: Providing information and support to help people take charge of their health • Acting as an advocate and representing all people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially around lifestyle factors that can help prevent or delay type 2 and help manage and control type 1 and type 2.