

Your guide to

MOVING MORE

when you
have diabetes



DiABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

WELCOME

This guide will give you the information you need on why it's important to move more when you have diabetes and what kind of exercises you can do in a way that suits you.

We've provided space for you to track your progress over a 10-week journey towards a healthier you, and reflect on what you're learning as you go.

By making a few small changes, you can start giving your health a boost.

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MOVING MORE WHEN YOU HAVE DIABETES

Moving more is good for diabetes. This includes traditional exercises like swimming or playing football. But also small things like moving more around the home, gardening or using the stairs instead of the lift. It all makes a difference.

We know that diabetes affects everyone differently. You don't always know how you'll feel or what you can and can't do.

In this guide, we'll take you through the benefits of moving more for diabetes and show you some things you can try – especially when you're at home. We'll help you to start small and build up, in a way that suits you.

Some people worry that being physically active will be too tiring or make their diabetes harder to manage. And if you're someone who gets hypos, you're probably worried about getting more.

Your worries are understandable, but we're here to bust some myths and show you some of the important benefits of being active when you have diabetes.



Some of the benefits of moving more are:

- it helps the body use insulin better
- it helps you look after your blood pressure. High blood pressure means you're more at risk of diabetes complications
- it helps you to improve your cholesterol level
- it helps you lose weight if you need to, and keep the weight off after you've lost it
- it gives you energy and help you get a good night's sleep
- it helps your joints and flexibility
- it helps your mood - exercise releases 'happy hormones' called endorphins
- it helps to reduce stress levels
- it helps you to improve your HbA1c if you have type 2 diabetes.

Being active can even help some people on their type 2 diabetes remission journey. Remission means that your blood sugar levels are below the diabetes range, usually without you needing to take any diabetes medication.

You don't have to join a gym or pay money to move more. What's important is to find something you enjoy.

What movements are good for you?

We understand moving more can be a big challenge. So, start with what feels achievable to you. For example, you could go for a walk around the block, play a sport in the garden, do a gentle online exercise class, cycle on flat ground or go for a swim. Even moving a little more makes a big difference.

Walking could be the best option for you as you can do it anywhere, any time and it's free. It's also easy on joints and suitable for all levels of fitness. If walking is too difficult, you could start with some chair-based exercises to get your body moving.

If you have painful joints, check whether your local swimming pool holds exercise classes. The water helps to support your joints while you move, but you still use your muscles.

Extra tips

When you feel ready to do a bit more, you could try to fit in activities that improve your muscle strength too, such as:

- carrying the shopping
- pilates
- yoga.

If you use insulin (or other medication that can cause hypos, such as sulphonylureas) remember to plan ahead if you are going to do some exercise, and check blood sugars more often afterwards.

Doing different types of exercises may cause your blood sugar levels to fall or rise. If you normally check your blood sugars at home, doing it before, during and after exercising can help to see the effect of moving more.

You may need to adjust your diabetes medication and how much carbohydrate you eat. If you're not sure, contact your GP or diabetes team.

Beginning to exercise can seem overwhelming at first, but most people are surprised when they actually start that it isn't as daunting as they thought it would be.

So give it a go and keep an open mind. You might end up enjoying the thing that you thought would be scary.



MY STARTING POINT

You might find it useful to think about where you are now and how your life could improve if you start to move more. Remembering why you want to get active can keep you going when you need some extra motivation.

1. Think about the reasons why you want to become more active.

For example: “I want to improve the way I manage my diabetes” or “I want to be more active for my grandkids”. Try to think about what’s important to you.

2. On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about moving more?

(1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not confident

Very confident

3. Think about how life might be different if you move more.

For example: "I could feel less stressed and improve my self-confidence".

4. What are your reasons against moving more?

For example: "I will have to make time out of an already busy day".

5. What are the ways that you can reduce these disadvantages?

Questions

If you have any questions while reading the guide, there's some space for you at the end to note down anything you might want to ask our helpline.





Before being diagnosed I was a bit of a couch potato but since then, I've completed the NHS couch to 5k, which I really enjoyed. It helped a lot with my mental health as well, which was an unexpected but nice bonus.

Sean



ACTIVITY JOURNAL

Take some time each week to record your journey and keep track of your successes for the next 10 weeks. This will help to keep you motivated to move a little bit more each day.

	Movements I'd like to try this week For example: "I'm going for a walk in the park".	What might get in the way? For example: "I might lack motivation".	
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			
Week 7			
Week 8			
Week 9			
Week 10			



How will I overcome what might get in the way?

For example: "I'm going to ask someone I know to join me".

Movements I did

For example: "I walked for 30 minutes in the morning".

How did I feel afterwards?

For example: "I'm proud I managed to go for a walk".

MOVING MORE AT HOME

There isn't one type of movement that's best for everyone with diabetes. It's about finding what works for you and it depends on lots of things, like what you enjoy and how much room you have in your house. It can be anything that gets you moving more.

How about:

- Hoovering the house and cleaning all the windows.
- A spot of DIY – time to tackle that shelf you've been putting off.
- Gardening. Or if you don't have a garden, do you have any houseplants you can water, prune and repot while standing up?

Pop some music on to help you feel motivated and move that much more.

If you need to start off at an easier pace, try standing during a TV advert. If you can manage it, work towards standing for the whole advert break, then to walking on the spot during adverts. You can mix this up by doing stretches instead, or jogging on the spot while the ads are on. This will help you get your steps up.

Online activities

Everyone's different, and some people find video workouts or apps helpful to keep them motivated. There are lots of options to choose from, you could start by signing up to our Learning Zone:

diabetes.org.uk/learningzone-move where you'll find three courses to help you get more active.



If I were to give others advice about getting more active initially, I'd say just start with gentle walks. Then, having built up confidence, just extend your walks by walking further, or walking more briskly.

Mahesh

Staying connected with others can give you the motivation you need when you're having a bad day and don't feel like exercising. When that's the case, why don't you ask a family member or neighbour to practice some yoga virtually? You could also join online groups.

There's no need to buy any equipment. Think about what you have already at home: a chair or sofa for seated exercises, tins of beans for weights and a towel for resistance exercises.



MOVING MORE WITH DIABETES COMPLICATIONS

If you have diabetes complications, like problems with your eyes and feet, you'll need to think a bit more about the movements you choose.

For example, if you have foot ulcers you might need to avoid certain types of weight-bearing activity like jogging. Chair-based exercises might be better for you, like raising your legs one after the other or lifting baked bean cans while you're sitting down.

Make sure you check your feet daily for any changes. Doing this after your exercises is really important in case of damage like blisters and cuts. Wear socks that don't rub and appropriate footwear that fits well.

If you have issues with your eyes, like retinopathy, gentle movements are usually OK to do.

Remember that a little bit of movement has so many benefits, do as much as you can and reward yourself for any small changes you make. It's really important you take care of your body, as well as moving more. So speak to your healthcare team for more advice on what's best for you before starting anything new. They can help you decide what's safe.



MY HALFWAY POINT

Well done! You are halfway through your 10-week journey to a healthier you.

After five weeks of moving more, look back at your progress so far. Turn back to your starting point on page 8 and see how far you've come.

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about moving more now?

(1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not confident

Very confident

2. Is there a difference in what you can do now compared to the beginning?

For example: "I can now walk around the block without feeling tired". List any changes, particularly the way you feel.

3. What went well and what was challenging?

For example: "I enjoyed doing a yoga class online. A challenge for me was the bad internet connection".

4. What do you want to do differently going forward?

For example: "I need to check the weather forecast before planning my walk".

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Living with a long-term health condition like diabetes has its ups and downs, not only physically but also emotionally. Diabetes can be exhausting and overwhelming. This can cause long periods of feeling low.

Remember that you are not alone. As many as **40% of people with diabetes** say they have struggled with their mental wellbeing since being diagnosed.

But moving more is good for your mind as well as your body, it can help you to:

- reduce your stress levels
- improve your low mood
- increase your self-esteem
- sleep better
- decrease anxiety
- reduce your risk of depression.

People who use insulin or medications that can lower blood sugar levels often say that the biggest barrier to moving more is the fear of hypoglycaemia (hypos). Always keep plenty of fast-acting, hypo-friendly carbohydrates, like sugary drinks and glucose tablets, to hand just in case you need them. This can help build your confidence and reassure you that you will be safe while being more active.



If you still have anxiety around hypos, make sure you check your blood sugar levels regularly to learn how your body reacts to certain movements.

More info

Worried about hypos?

diabetes.org.uk/hypo-anxiety-move

For more support

diabetes.org.uk/emotions-move

You can get tailored information and advice on all aspects of moving more by calling our helpline on **0345 123 2399***

Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm

or emailing helpline@diabetes.org.uk

MINDFUL EXERCISE

If you're feeling a bit low and are looking for an activity to re-energise both your body and mind, why don't you go out for a walk and do the five senses exercise?

It's a very simple exercise of noticing things that you can see, feel, hear, smell and taste. Take the guide with you and jot down these things in the table below. There are no right or wrong answers.

5 things you can SEE For example: "I see a big tree".	4 things you can FEEL For example: "I feel the wind on my face".	3 things you can HEAR For example: "I hear people talking".	2 things you can SMELL For example: "I smell freshly cut grass".	1 thing you can TASTE For example: "I taste coffee".

BREATHING EXERCISE

If you're feeling stressed or anxious, doing some breathing exercises can help you feel more relaxed.



Inhale slowly as you count to four in your head.



Hold the breath as you count to four.



Exhale slowly and count to four.

You can do this anywhere, even when you go out for a walk.

EATING WELL

As you start to move more and feel healthier, you might want to know more about how healthy eating can complement your exercises.

There is no specific diet for diabetes. But the foods you eat not only make a difference to how you manage your diabetes, they also affect how well you feel and how much energy you have.

A healthy balanced diet will make sure your body gets a good range of nutrients and can help you manage your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. This will help reduce the risk of diabetes complications, heart problems, strokes and other health conditions including certain types of cancers.



MY FINISHING POINT

Congratulations on moving more for 10 weeks!

We know that starting to move more isn't always easy. We hope that the tips provided in this guide have helped you to find new and fun ways to do so.

1. Now let's look back at the progress you've made so far.

List your biggest achievements:

2. Is there a difference in what you can do now compared to the beginning?

List any changes, particularly the way you feel.

3. How will you continue to move more?

List your future goals.



YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

CONTACT US

If you have any questions, want to talk to someone about your condition or simply want to be heard, you can call our helpline on **0345 123 2399**

(Calls may be recorded for quality and training purposes)

Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm

or email helpline@diabetes.org.uk

Did you know that we have a free Support Forum where you can exchange knowledge and experiences with other people with diabetes, family and carers? You may not feel that you need advice, but you may be in a position to give it, and to help others

diabetes.org.uk/support-forum-move

We'd love to stay in touch and to hear what changes you've made

[@DiabetesUK](https://twitter.com/DiabetesUK)



Find more information on moving more with diabetes
diabetes.org.uk/exercise-move



DiABETES UK

KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

The British Diabetic Association operating as Diabetes UK, a charity registered in England and Wales (no. 215199) and in Scotland (no. SC039136). A company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with no. 00339181 and registered office at Wells Lawrence House, 126 Back Church Lane, London E1 1FH

