Exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, especially for patients with diabetes. The goal is to make exercise a part of every day by doing enjoyable activities.¹

- Regular exercise in patients with diabetes helps lower blood sugar and blood pressure, and improves cholesterol levels for a healthy heart.¹²
- Burning calories contributes to weight loss, and staying active can keep the pounds off.¹
- Lowering blood sugar and weight may mean taking less insulin or fewer diabetes pills.¹
- By participating in structured exercise activities for at least 8 weeks, glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA₁c) can be lowered by an average of 0.66%, and there is even greater benefit with higher levels of exercise.²

The American Diabetes Association currently recommends moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes/day, 5 days/week.²³

- A comprehensive exercise routine should include aerobic (physical) exercise, strength training, flexibility exercises, and other forms of activities to stay active throughout the day.
- Recommendations for these activities for patients who have no medical or physical limitations are (See charts on back):¹³⁴
  - Moderate-intensity aerobic activity for ≥30 minutes 5 days per week, or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity for ≥20 minutes 3 days per week, unless contraindicated.
- Activity can be divided into ≥10-minute segments to achieve the 30-minute goal.
- Overweight or obese patients may target 60-90 minutes, 6-7 days per week.
  - Resistance training 3-4 days per week to increase lean muscle mass. This includes upper-, core-, and lower-body strengthening exercises using free weights, resistance machines, or resistance bands.
  - Stretching exercises when muscles are warm or at the end of the activity to loosen muscles and prevent soreness.

There is no single activity program that suits every patient with diabetes.¹⁵

- Work with your clinician and the health care team to develop an activity program that fits your physical abilities, medical needs, interests, and lifestyle.
- Your health care team may recommend that you meet with an exercise physiologist or physical therapist trained to work with people with diabetes.
- The key is to choose safe and effective activities that you can enjoy and do on a regular basis.
- Make detailed plans and set realistic and specific goals.
- Keep track of your progress, perhaps using a physical activity log or a pedometer.
**EXAMPLES OF AEROBIC EXERCISE AND STRENGTH TRAINING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aerobic Exercise (30 minutes/day, &gt;5 days/week)</th>
<th>Strength Training (3 times a week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Brisk walking outdoors with family or friends (and the dog!)</td>
<td>- Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brisk walking on a treadmill</td>
<td>- Ice skating or roller skating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low-impact aerobics</td>
<td>- Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swimming or water aerobics</td>
<td>- Raking leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bicycling outdoors or on a stationary bicycle indoors</td>
<td>- Mowing the lawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Volleyball or basketball</td>
<td>- Washing the car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tennis</td>
<td>- Heavy housecleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ice skating or roller skating</td>
<td>- Pushing a stroller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dancing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Raking leaves</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REMAINING ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

- Park farther away from entrances to work or shopping for a longer walk
- Walk or bike to the destination if a short distance away
- Get off the bus one stop earlier
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk for 30 minutes after work before driving home in traffic
- Walk home from the train or bus, taking a longer route
- Walk with a colleague or friend for 20 minutes at the start of lunch hour
- Walk around while you talk on the phone
- Avoid using the drive-up window
- Carry things up the stairs in two trips instead of one
- Play with the children
- Do some housecleaning every day
- Exercise at home while watching television
- Join a social dance club or exercise program that meets several times a week
- Go to a shopping mall, flea market, country fair, museum, or art gallery
- If wheelchair-bound, wheel yourself for part of every day

**REFERENCES**