Diet & Exercise

Although diabetes cannot be cured, it can be managed. Controlling blood glucose as well as blood pressure and cholesterol is the best defence against serious complications of diabetes.

Type 1 diabetics manage their blood glucose with insulin - delivered by either injection or a pump. Many people with type 2 diabetes can manage blood glucose levels with diet and exercise alone. Others require oral medications and/or insulin.

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GlucoRx Quality Diabetes Care

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Diabetes is a progressive disease and, over time, diabetics may need both lifestyle modification and medications. If you have diabetes, keeping your blood glucose levels within the range recommended by your doctor can be challenging.

Food and fitness can affect this.

Eating

You need to know how different foods and the amount you eat affect your blood glucose levels:

- Learn about **carbohydrate counting and portion sizes** - Carbohydrates often have the biggest impact on blood glucose levels. If you take insulin at meal times, it is crucial to know the amount of carbohydrates in your food so you get the proper insulin dose. Also learn what portion size is appropriate for each food type.
- Make **every meal well-balanced** - Consult a dietician to plan your meals and ensure a good mix of starches, fruits, vegetables, proteins, and fats. It is especially important to pay attention to the types of carbohydrates you choose. Low carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, contain fibre and are better at stabilising blood glucose levels.
- **Coordinate your meals and medication schedules** - Too little food in proportion to your diabetes medications, especially insulin, may result in dangerously low blood glucose (hypoglycaemia). Overeating may cause your blood glucose level to climb too high (hyperglycaemia).
- **Avoid sugary drinks** (including those sweetened with high fructose corn syrup or sucrose) - These tend to be high in calories, not very nutritious and cause blood glucose to rise quickly. The exception is if you are experiencing hypoglycaemia, in which case sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda, juice and sports drinks can be used to quickly raise blood glucose to normal level.

Exercise

Physical activity is another important part of your diabetes management plan. When you exercise, your muscles use glucose for energy. Regular physical activity also helps your body use insulin more efficiently. These factors work together to lower your blood glucose level. The more strenuous your workout, the longer the effect lasts. But even light activities - such as housework, gardening or being on your feet for extended periods - can improve your blood glucose level.

- **Exercise plan and schedule.** Ask your doctor about what type of exercise is appropriate for you. In general, most adults should exercise at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week. If you have been inactive for a long time, your doctor may want to check your overall health before recommending the right balance of aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercise. Check the best time of day for you to exercise so that your workout routine is coordinated with your meal and medication schedules.
- **Check your blood glucose level** before, during and after exercise, especially if you take insulin or medicines that lower blood glucose. Exercise can lower your blood glucose levels even a day later, especially if the activity is new to you, or if you are exercising at a more intensive level. Signs of low blood glucose include feeling shaky, weak, tired, hungry, lightheaded, irritable, anxious or confused. Always have a small snack or glucose tablet with you during exercise in case your blood glucose drops too low. Wear a medical 'Diabetic' identification bracelet when exercising.
- **Stay hydrated**. Drink plenty of water or other fluids while exercising because dehydration can affect blood glucose levels.
- **Adjust your diabetes treatment plan accordingly.** If you take insulin, you may need to reduce your dose before exercising or wait awhile after exercise to inject insulin. Your doctor can advise on appropriate changes in your medication, like in the case of you increasing your exercise routine.