

Maintaining Aerobic Exercise

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An Aerobic Exercise Plan

Follow the plan here to continue to increase your frequency, intensity, and time of walking, or other aerobic activity, to improve your cardiovascular fitness. Try not to go more than 2 days without doing aerobic exercise.

Advanced Aerobic Progression

Table adapted from: Warburton, et al. 2006

Program Stage	Week	Frequency (days/week)	Intensity		Duration (min)
			Exertion Level	RPE (10 pt)	
Improvement	1 - 4	4	Somewhat hard	4	25 - 30
	5 - 7	4	Somewhat hard	4	30 - 35
	8 - 10	4	Somewhat hard	4	35 - 40
	11 - 13	4	Somewhat hard - Hard	4 - 5	40 - 45
	14 - 16	4 - 5	Somewhat hard - Hard	4 - 5	45 - 50
	17 - 20	4 - 5	Hard	5 - 6	50 - 55
Maintenance	21 - 24	4 - 5	Hard	5 - 6	55 - 60
	25 +	4 - 5 +	Moderate - Hard	4 - 6	30 - 60

Regular Exercise

By making regular exercise part of your life, you have already taken an important step in managing your diabetes. Maintaining regular exercise in your weekly routine is the next step to successfully managing your diabetes.

NOTE: Exercise may affect your responses to medications. Make sure you test your blood sugar regularly. Speak with your diabetes care provider if you notice any differences in your regular blood sugar pattern.

RPE = Rating of Perceived Exertion

Pick the number matching the word or phrase that best reflects your total amount of physical stress, effort, and fatigue while exercising. This number identifies your exercise **intensity**. Record on your exercise log after each session.

- 0 Rest
- 1 Very light
- 2 Light
- 3 Moderate
- 4 Somewhat hard
- 5 Hard (breathing deeply)
- 6
- 7 Very hard (out of breath)
- 8
- 9
- 10 Maximal

Intensity is Important

Light (RPE 1 - 2)

easy walking, golf, gardening, dusting, laundry, stretching, yoga, curling, bowling

Moderate (RPE 3 - 6)

brisk walking, climbing stairs, mowing the lawn, swimming, dancing, biking

Vigorous* (RPE ≥ 7)

running, fast cycling, hockey, basketball, gym workouts

***Vigorous physical activity** can be started after a period of regular physical activity and with the approval of your doctor or with the guidance of a qualified exercise professional.

You should seek help from a health care provider if you have:

- Difficulties with the exercises.
- Feel too much discomfort trying to exercise such as shortness of breath, pain in the chest or arms, joint pain, or episodes of light headedness.
- Frequent low blood sugar.

Physical Activity and Exercise

Exercise is a form of physical activity that is done at enough intensity to improve your fitness. Resistance training, brisk walking, cycling, and jogging are examples of exercise. As exercise is more challenging than just accumulating physical activity through your day, it often needs some planning, a certain level of ability, and a little more effort.

Benefits of Exercise

While regular exercise often requires a commitment of both time and energy, the benefits of exercise are greater than that of general physical activity.

What are the Immediate Benefits?

Exercise (such as brisk walking or resistance training) uses more muscles at greater intensity, so more energy is used up. This allows you to control your blood sugar more easily.

What are the Benefits if I Keep at it?

Over the long term, exercise can result in:

- Improved fitness and body composition.
- Reduced complications of diabetes such as lowered risk of heart disease.
- Improved diabetes, including blood sugar, blood fats, and blood pressure.
- Improved overall fitness and health. You can enjoy many things in life more easily.

Check out the rest of this handout to see how maintaining 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise each week can help you manage your diabetes.

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Setting Goals – Staying Motivated

When you try to stay active, it is helpful to have a goal to work towards.

Using the space below, write down the physical activity or exercise goal you most want to achieve. You can do this on your own or with the help of a diabetes care provider.

My GOAL is to:

Is this a SMART goal?

It helps if the goals you set are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-oriented. Review your goal. Using the examples below, see if it is a **SMART** goal for you.

Is my goal...

S	S = SPECIFIC	S
	“Lose 5 kg (11 lbs),” instead of “lose weight.”	
M	M = MEASURABLE	M
	“Walk 35 minutes a day,” instead of “walk more.”	
A	A = ATTAINABLE	A
	“Lose 2 kg (5 lbs) in a month,” instead of “10 kg (22 lbs) in a month.”	
R	R = RELEVANT	R
	“I want to lose weight, so I can play with my kids.”	
T	T = TIME-ORIENTED	T
	“Lose 5 kg (11 lbs) in 2 months,” instead of “lose weight.”	

If you need to, change your goal so that it will be a **SMART** way to help you stay motivated.

To make your goal even more motivating, write it down, and post it where you will see it every day.

How to Stick With It

Beginning and staying with a physical activity or exercise program can be difficult for many people. However, there are a few things you can do to help you stick with it.

Use Goals to Guide Your Progress

Make short-term, realistic goals to aim for each week; for example, getting out 3 times that week. Smart goals help to motivate you and give you something to aim for.

If you do not reach your goals, ask yourself why. Adjust them and keep trying.

Reward Yourself

Reward yourself when you reach your goals. Rewards often feel good and help to mark your accomplishments.

Buying new clothes because you have lost weight or going camping because you are more mobile are great ways to give yourself a pat on the back.

Build on Success

You are already active, which is great! Progressing in your program is important to obtaining long-term benefits. See the progression plan with this handout to guide you.



As you become comfortable, try different types of exercise or simply a different order. Variety helps you from getting bored – spice it up! Try a new form of activity with the confidence you have gained.

Include Others

People are interested in your health and will often help you stick with it, so tell someone (for example, friend, spouse, or kids) about your exercise program.

Buddy up! Having someone (for example, friend, spouse, or coworker) to exercise with is a great way to stay motivated and helps keep exercise fun. Ask your local Diabetes Centre staff if they can identify others who are looking to be active.

Stay Injury Free

Be aware that some days you may not feel up to exercising because of illness or an injury. Your overall health is important.

Missing a session should not be the end of your efforts. Once you feel better, begin your program again slowly. You’ll be back to your old self in no time.

Remember, as you continue your physical activity or exercise program, make sure you test your blood sugar regularly if you are at risk for low blood sugar, balance your food with your activity, and take care of your feet.

Planning for Bumps in the Road

No one is physically active all the time. Missing out on planned exercise is not the end of the world; it’s normal. However, planning ahead for these “tough” times may help you stay active. Use the following questions to help make a plan to stay active.

If you’ve had trouble staying active in the past:

- What made it difficult for you?
- What could you do differently next time?
- What helped get you back on track?



How confident are you that you’ll be able to keep up your physical activity during the next month?

- 5 - Very confident
- 4 - Confident
- 3 - Somewhat confident
- 2 - Not very confident
- 1 - Not at all confident

If you checked less than a 4, consider the following tips on planning for bumps in the road.

Identify situations that will make it more challenging for you to stay active.

Plan how you will handle these situations to increase your chances of being successful.

Consider these examples:

- **Situation.** Unplanned event after work (when you usually exercise).
Possible Solution. Plan for a make-up time every week to cope with unplanned changes.
- **Situation.** Bad weather during the winter.
Possible Solution. Change the exercises you do so that you can be active indoors.

To stay successful, remember what it took to get started.