

# Tips for Engaging Patients With Diabetes in Exercise Plans



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For patients with diabetes, regular exercise can benefit overall health and improve glycemic control. Counseling patients about various types of exercise and the associated benefits may help them engage in their care plans. Although specific recommendations may vary by the type of diabetes and the presence of diabetes-related health complications, the following general guidelines are a good foundation.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Focus on moving more.

Recommend increased physical activity and decreased physical inactivity.

**Accommodations** for different abilities may be necessary.

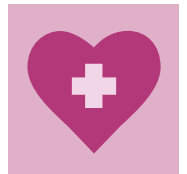
- Create **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Based) goals with patients to help them reach the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week.
- Start slowly with an activity they enjoy and gradually increase the intensity and duration of that activity over time.<sup>1</sup>
- Encourage patients to take frequent activity breaks when sitting for extended periods of time.<sup>1</sup>
- Remind patients that walking counts.



## 2. Help patients understand the benefits of exercise.

Engage patients by detailing the benefits of exercise as a health-promoting behavior.<sup>1</sup>

- Exercise reduces blood glucose, HbA1C, and insulin resistance, and lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease and nerve damage.<sup>1-3</sup>
- Exercise can help to improve weight loss, sleep quality, memory, peripheral neuropathy, mood, blood pressure, and cholesterol.<sup>1-3</sup>



## 3. Encourage safety during exercise.

Tailor safety recommendations to specific conditions.

- Make patients aware that hypoglycemia is a particular concern during exercise and for several hours afterward; remind them to have a source of carbohydrate nearby.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, patients on insulin therapy may be more susceptible to hypoglycemia and are more at risk for physical injuries related to exercise.
- Counsel patients with neuropathy or retinopathy on fall prevention. Remind patients to wear footwear that fits properly and is appropriate for the activity. Regularly monitor patients for good foot hygiene.<sup>3</sup>



For more information, access Cardi-OH's expanded resources on **lifestyle changes to prevent diabetes**, **exercising to promote heart health**, and **achieving an active lifestyle**.

### References

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3. Riddell MC, Gallen IW, Smart CE, et al. Exercise management in type 1 diabetes: a consensus statement. *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol*. 2017;5(5):377-390. doi:10.1016/S2213-8587(17)30014-1.

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