

## Exercising When You Have Diabetes

This handout offers guidelines for exercise when you have diabetes.

### Why exercise

- Your blood sugar will stay lower
- You will feel better
- You will lose weight
- It may help lower your blood pressure
- It may help lower your cholesterol
- It makes your heart stronger

### What exercises are best for you

- Ask your doctor what exercises are best for you
- Try some exercises other people with diabetes enjoy
  - Walking in good shoes
  - Low impact aerobics, including water aerobics
  - Swimming
  - Stationary cycling

### Before you start an exercise program

- Get a foot exam
- Have good shoes to wear that fit well
- Get an eye exam
- Get your blood sugar checked
- If you have a heart problem, you may need to be careful how you exercise
- Ask your doctor if you need a heart check up
  - Exercise stress test
  - Echo test or echocardiogram
  - Other tests

### Before and after exercise

- Check your blood sugar
  - 30 minutes before you exercise
  - Every 30 minutes during exercise
  - After you exercise
- Eat a snack like crackers, bread, or fruit (ask your doctor)
- Or drink a glass of fruit juice or skim milk

## Exercising When You Have Diabetes Cont'd

### When you exercise

- Start slow, try 10 minutes a day
- Increase the time only a little each day
- Increase the level (easy to hard) only a little each day
- Try to reach 30 minutes a day

### Taking insulin

- Ask your doctor
  - How long to wait after you inject to exercise
  - How to change the dose when you exercise
  - What is a good blood sugar number for you
    - Before exercise: \_\_\_\_\_
    - During exercise: \_\_\_\_\_
    - After exercise: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Where to inject insulin before you exercise
    - Try not to inject on leg if running or playing soccer
    - Try not to inject on arm if lifting weights

### Low blood sugar

- Signs of low blood sugar
  - Sweat a lot
  - Heart beats very fast
  - Feel dizzy
  - Headache
  - Tremble a lot
  - Eyesight blurry or cannot see well
  - Hungry
  - Very irritable or grumpy
- What to do for an emergency
  - Have an easy way to check your blood sugar during exercise
  - Carry a piece of hard candy or a sugar pill to use when your blood sugar gets too low
  - Wear or carry medical ID (identification)
  - Carry a cell phone, pager, or coins for a pay phone, in case you need help

## **Exercising When You Have Diabetes Cont'd**

### **Know the warning signs of a heart attack**

- Pain or ache in chest, neck, jaw, shoulder, or arm
- Heavy or pressed feeling in chest that may spread to neck, shoulder, or arm
- Heartburn or pain in upper chest
- Heart beats very fast or skips a beat
- Feel faint or lightheaded
- Sweat a lot
- Short of breath
- Sick to stomach (nausea)