

Types of Physical Activity

This handout accompanies the physical activity video series from the American Diabetes Association® for people who are looking to reduce their risk for or manage type 2 diabetes. These activities are great for anyone with diabetes, but talk to your health care professional before beginning any new type of exercise.

Physical activity includes any movement that elevates your heart rate (which can improve heart health), increases your metabolism, aids weight loss, lowers your blood pressure, increases your HDL (“good”) cholesterol, and boosts your mood.

Physical activity is especially beneficial for people with prediabetes and diabetes because it can help lower your blood glucose (also called blood sugar) by increasing your body’s ability to use it for energy (by increasing insulin sensitivity).

Here are some ways to increase your heart rate and reach your goal of 150 minutes of physical activity each week—that’s 30 minutes a day, five days a week.



WEIGHT TRAINING

Lifting weights builds muscle mass, which is important for people with prediabetes and diabetes. If muscle mass is lost, it becomes more difficult to manage your blood glucose. Include weight training or resistance exercises in your routine using resistance bands, free weights, or machines at your gym.



WALKING

If it’s too hot to walk outside, take short walk breaks around the house throughout the day. Before you know it, you’ll have walked for 20 minutes. If you’re up for a more vigorous alternative, go up and down the stairs in your home to increase your heart rate even more.



YOGA

You've probably heard that yoga helps reduce stress. Higher stress levels mean higher blood glucose, so adding yoga into your routine is a win-win for people with or at risk for type 2 diabetes.



BIKING

This popular form of physical activity builds heart and lung strength. Try starting with a stationary bike to build your endurance!



SWIMMING

Exercising in the water is a great, low-impact physical activity. Since water is less stressful on your body than walking, it's a more moderate way to stay active.



JUMPING ROPE

It's not just for kids! Jumping rope gives you a full body workout while improving heart health and muscle strength—and it's fun! Don't have a rope? Jumping jacks are a simple alternative.



DANCING

There's a reason people around the world love to dance as a workout. Increase your heart rate while listening to music by visiting a dance studio or finding dance videos online. Salsa, hip hop, and other high-energy dances are great options.



CHAIR-BASED EXERCISES

Easy and stable chair-based exercises are perfect for any age group or fitness level, particularly for building muscle and increasing your heart rate. Online videos offer numerous chair-based exercises depending on your interest. Just remember to pick a chair that is sturdy and comfortable.



LESS CONVENTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Kayaking, pickle ball, bowling, martial arts, tai chi, water aerobics, kickboxing, rowing, stationary bike, tennis, cross-country skiing, and high-intensity interval training (done at lots of different fitness levels) are also good physical activity options.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY YOU MIGHT NOT THINK OF AS EXERCISE

The following activities raise your heart rate but you might not think of them as exercise: Yard work, cleaning, mopping, vacuuming, changing bed sheets, roughhousing with kids, and working in the garage.



Get active now and prevent, delay, or manage type 2 diabetes!