

DIABETES AND EXERCISING SAFELY

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What can I do to exercise safely?

The effect of exercise on the body is to bring down the blood glucose level. Although this is a positive benefit of exercise, precautions must be taken to prevent hypoglycemia or low blood sugar.

- Wear and carry identification stating that you have diabetes.
- Bring your glucose meter to the gym to monitor your blood glucose level.
- Carry a fast-acting carbohydrate with you, such as glucose tabs.
- Exercise with a partner or let a friend/family member know where you will be exercising and the time you expect to return home.
- Bring money (change) for a telephone call or to buy a snack if necessary.
- Avoid exercising late in the evening as this may increase the risk of low blood glucose (hypoglycemia) during the night.
- Avoid exercising during the time you anticipate your insulin will be peaking or working its hardest.
- Be aware of the early signs and symptoms of low blood glucose.
- If you use insulin, use an injection site on your abdomen rather than a limb that will be used during exercise.
- Check your feet for blisters or sores after exercising.
- Discuss with your physician the need for adjusting your insulin dose on days you will be exercising.
- Remember that the blood glucose lowering effect of exercise can last up to 48 hours which increases the chance of having hypoglycemia.

Are there times when I should postpone exercise?

Exercise should be postponed in the following situations:

- Blood glucose is too high (more than 300 mg/dl or more than 250 mg/dl with ketones in the urine).
- Blood glucose is low (less than 100 mg/dl). Have a snack and check blood glucose prior to exercising.
- The weather is too hot or too cold.
- You are undergoing treatment for active retinal hemorrhage or retinopathy.

How often should I exercise?

Before beginning an exercise program, discuss with your physician how much and how often to exercise. An exercise program must be tailored to your individual ability and any additional conditions or complications you may have. Physical exercise improves blood glucose levels and increases the body's sensitivity to insulin during exercise and for up to 48 hours afterwards. Therefore, it is generally recommended that exercise should be a minimum of 20 minutes every other day. For individuals beginning an exercise program, the exercise should be stopped as soon as you begin to feel tired. Gradually, you may be able to tolerate 20 minutes of exercise each day without feeling tired.

Where can I learn more about exercise and diabetes?

If you have questions you may contact any of the following resources:

Organization	Phone
Greenwich Hospital Healthy Living Center	203.863.3756
Greenwich Hospital Diabetes Resource Program	203.863.2954
American Diabetes Association	800.232.3472
Web Resources	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Diabetes Association:	www.diabetes.org
<input type="checkbox"/> American College of Sports Medicine:	www.acsm.org

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education