

Script – Print – Working Up to Working Out

People With Diabetes Should Ease into Exercising

It's no secret that everyone needs some form of exercise. It helps improve everything from sleep to mood to relieving stress. Exercise is also vital to people with diabetes, especially for its blood glucose lowering effects and ability to minimize the risk of heart disease.

"It does help lower the risk of heart disease – that is the number one cause of death for patients with diabetes," said Tanya Munger, Nurse Practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. "It helps to lower blood pressure, it helps to keep their LDL or bad cholesterol lower; exercise helps to increase the good cholesterol, which we call HDL cholesterol, keep their weight in a healthy range, and it helps to reduce their stress levels and elevate their mood. Patients with diabetes who regularly engage in physical activity often times we are able to reduce several of their prescription medications."

According to Harvard Medical School, many studies have been done over the years that clearly demonstrate the benefits of exercise for people with diabetes. Among them:

- Resistance training and aerobic exercise both helped to lower insulin resistance in previously sedentary older adults with abdominal obesity at risk for disease.
- People with diabetes who walked at least two hours a week were less likely to die of heart disease than people who were sedentary.
- Women with diabetes who spent at least four hours a week doing moderate or vigorous exercise had a 40 % lower risk of developing heart disease than those who didn't exercise.

"How that works is our body uses glucose or sugar for fuel or energy so our normal insulin that we make, it moves the sugar out of our blood and moves it into the muscle where we're able to use it for energy or fuel," said Tanya Munger, Nurse Practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. "The more physically active we are the more sugar we're burning. So essentially for someone with diabetes, physical activity – I tell a lot of patients – this is a free medication for you that has absolutely no side effects."

Munger recommends people with diabetes should start with a goal of 150 minutes of exercise a week, which can be broken up to best fit your daily schedule. And, she stresses, the workout doesn't have to be strenuous – especially in the beginning.

"For patients who have not engaged in any physical activity at all we really recommend that they start off slow," said Tanya Munger, Nurse Practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. "Maybe parking your car further away from the door. Opting to take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walking out to their mailbox and back and the next day walking a little bit further."

Munger also suggests checking your blood sugar before you start to exercise. If your blood sugar is over 300, wait until your numbers improve before starting to workout. If your blood sugar is less than 100 Munger suggests having a small snack of 15 grams of carbohydrates before working out. It's also important to stay hydrated while exercising and always check with your physician prior to starting any exercise program.

But the main lesson is to simply get started.

"Sitting is the new smoking," said Tanya Munger, Nurse Practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. "There is a ton of research out there that shows the negative effects of sitting are the same as smoking

cigarettes. People who are inactive and sedentary do have higher blood pressure, higher cholesterol, higher blood sugar, typically they are obese, which leads to heart disease.”

For more information on diabetes care, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).