

Gardening and Exercising

Every winter we plan our gardens and we start thinking about what crops we would like to plant. We think about the fall harvest, the ripe tomatoes, the corn and the beans.

When spring finally comes, we are ready to work in the ground, turning it over for the seeds. Carefully we plant the tender seeds in the warm soil. Every day we tend the seeds making sure they have plenty of water.

Soon the plants begin to emerge from the ground. We water the new plants and pull the weeds. The plants bloom and tiny vegetables begin to appear.

The summer rains and sunshine make the plants grow big and strong. All summer we take care of the plants in the garden, with the hope that we will have lots of vegetables.

One day we go to the garden and see the tomatoes red in color, the corn, golden and the beans, ripe. We begin to gather the crops and smile.

Last winter, so many months ago, when it was still dark and cold, we had visions of this very day. Our efforts in choosing the seeds, working the soil, planting the garden, and tending the plants have been successful. We have a good crop and feel proud of ourselves.

Getting started with exercise is much like having a garden. With our gardens, we have a plan and set a goal - to make a garden and have vegetables, even though we may not say I'm planning a garden and my goal is to have vegetables. Just like you plan your garden with the goal of having vegetables, you can plan your exercise with the goal of lowering your blood sugar.

We know you've heard you need to get more exercise, but do you know why exercise is such a big deal? Exercise is a big deal because exercise will lower your blood sugar! That is the most important thing about exercise. Exercise is a big deal for people with diabetes! Exercise will lower your blood sugar and make you feel better! Exercise may prevent or delay diabetes for your family and friends!

Healthy exercising means that you do it:

- ✓ At least 20 minutes all at one time
- ✓ 3-4 times per week
- ✓ Your heart beats faster
- ✓ You sweat a little
- ✓ You breathe harder than usual
- ✓ You feel like you're working a little
- ✓ Should be easy enough to talk to someone while you're exercising, and it's fun!

When you have diabetes, your body has trouble using food for energy and you end up with too much sugar in your blood. Blood sugar is a funny thing, you can't feel sugar in your blood, but it's there. When you exercise, your body uses up the sugar in your blood for energy! So when you exercise your blood sugar gets lower.

Once you get started exercising and are exercising regularly, exercise can help you use up calories even when you are sitting still! Pretty neat, huh? So exercise can lower your blood sugar and help you maintain your weight or lose weight. Because exercise lowers your blood sugar, you may need less medication. If you have a question about your medicine, you should check your blood sugar and ask your health care provider.

Exercise makes everything about diabetes easier!

In addition to lowering your blood sugar, exercise can also make it easier to do the following:

- ✓ Lose weight
- ✓ Sleep better
- ✓ Feel younger
- ✓ Be more alert
- ✓ Handle stress
- ✓ Have more energy
- ✓ Improve blood flow
- ✓ Keep your heart fit
- ✓ Keep extra weight off
- ✓ Keep your spirits high
- ✓ Feel more self confident
- ✓ Increase your muscle tone
- ✓ Control high blood pressure
- ✓ Avoid diabetes complications

Choose an exercise plan and exercise goal for yourself. Look back at the list of what exercise does for you. Try thinking of exercise like you do your garden, you have to plan it, choose the things you like, take care of it every day, and you are more likely to be successful with your exercise.

Just like your family and friends help you with your garden, by weeding and watering, family and friends can help you with your exercise goal by exercising with you, watching the children while you go for a jog and walking to the post office with you. What else can you think of?

When you plan your exercise and pick a goal, make sure it is one you know you can do. You wouldn't think of planting a garden full of grapefruit trees in New Mexico, would you?

Plan a small exercise change to start with. For example, "This week I plan to walk to the post office every other day instead of driving and have more energy!"

Plan your exercise and your goals for this week!

If you want to start exercising: good for you, you've decided to give it a try! Here's how to get started.

- ✓ Exercise 10 minutes at a time every day to get started.
- ✓ Increase by 5 minutes a week.

By the end of the month you will be exercising for 20-25 minutes at a time!

Exercise tips!

1. Remember when you exercise you lose moisture by sweating and you need to replace your body's fluids by drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water a day!
2. When the weather is bad, try exercising with the TV. There are exercise programs on Channel 5. You can watch Sit and Be Fit at 7 AM on Saturday or Home Stretch at either 6 AM or at 11:30 AM, Monday through Friday. Check your newspaper for current times.
3. Instead of watching TV in the evening, you can play an aerobic exercise tape in your VCR and exercise with your family or walk while listening to your favorite music.
4. You can chop wood for 20 minutes, that will keep you warm and you'll be getting exercise!
5. You can dance to music in your house for an hour.

What else can you think of?

When we have a garden, we are thinking about the ripe tomatoes, and the golden sweet corn, these are some of the rewards of having a garden!

Rewards are a good way to keep ourselves going. Exercise has a lot of rewards like lowering our blood sugars and feeling younger. Occasionally we can have a special reward for exercising.

When choosing a reward try not to think only of food as a reward! Here are some ideas.

Go dancing!
Call a friend!
Go to a movie!
Make jewelry!
Buy new yarn!
Do some sewing!
Play some music!
Do some weaving!

Try a new hairstyle!
Try some new beads!
Go window shopping!
Get some new paints!
Try a new pair of socks!
Buy a new paint brush!
Try a new pair of shoes!

A new plant or fresh flowers!
Spend time with your child or grandchild!
Put 10 cents in a piggybank for each 10 minutes you exercise!

We learn from each other. Your family learns from watching what you do. You can help your family get started exercising by getting started yourself! If you are having trouble getting started with exercise, think of this. You are setting an example for your children and grandchildren and can possibly prevent or delay diabetes in those you love! Families that exercise regularly may prevent or delay diabetes and will be generally healthier.

Family and friends can make exercise more fun! You are probably already doing things together, like walking together, and playing games together.

Getting grandmother, grandfather, the children, brothers and sisters together for a walk around the community can be a lot of fun!

Take a few minutes and think of at least one family or friend who can help you get started exercising and make it more fun.

Think about your garden for a minute. The plants are tall and strong. The roots and the soil keep the plants strong, through the sunny days, as well as the stormy days. Our families and friends are like the roots and soil of the corn plants in our gardens, giving us support through the good and bad times. This is what we mean by the word "support".

Excuses, Excuses!

"I hear what you are saying and I'd like to exercise more, but sometimes things get in the way."

You're not alone! We all have excuses! No time. It's too cold. No baby sitter. It's too hard! I don't like exercise. My spouse won't let me go walking. I'm just too tired. These are just a few excuses. Do any of these sound familiar?

Take a minute and think of at least one thing that gets in your way of exercise. If you want to you can write it down. Now let's pick one of the excuses we talked about, "I don't have enough time." What is at least one thing you could do to get around this excuse? If you want you can write it down here.

Try the same thing with these excuses. "I'm too old" and replace it with "I'm never too old to exercise." And, "I'm too tired" and replace it with "I know if I go for a walk, I'll feel better."

We all have things which come up, which get in the way and may cause us to stop exercising once or twice or even more. Just get started again and work your way back to a healthier you.

Okay, now let's plan an exercise, and choose a reward. Take a minute and think of an exercise that you'd be interested in trying.

This week, in order to exercise more, I plan to...

(For example, walk to the post office every day)

My reward for at the end of the week is

(For example, to rent a favorite video)

I will ask my friend or family to help me by

(For example, walk to the post office with me)

I promise to do the best I can with my exercise plan and to get my family or friend to help.

My signature

My family member's or friend's signature

As I greet each day, I thank the Great Spirit for another day that I can take care of myself and my family and see my friends. I make each day count towards a healthier one, by including an exercise time to enjoy the beauty of Mother Earth and all that surround me each day. And the Great Spirit for a good day and all of its blessings.

Great Spirit, thank you for another day,
In which I can spread my wings like the eagle,
Gathering wisdom and strength to make life's changes,
For a healthier tomorrow,
Through working the body and taking the time,
To enjoy each other and passing time.

(Source: Native American Diabetes Project, <http://www.laplaza.org/health/dwc/nadp/>)