

Managing Diabetes

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Diabetes is a condition in which the body cannot properly use glucose for energy. This causes glucose to build up in the blood. High levels of blood glucose can result in health conditions such as heart disease, kidney disease, nerve damage, and more. There are several known benefits of managing diabetes appropriately.

Benefits of Managing Diabetes

Managing blood glucose helps to:

- Have higher energy levels
- Feel less tired
- Feel less thirsty
- Urinate less often
- Heal from injuries faster
- Have fewer infections
- Have fewer problems with eyesight, feet, and gums

Physical activity, a balanced diet, and correct medication—if necessary—are three ways to manage diabetes (Figure 1).

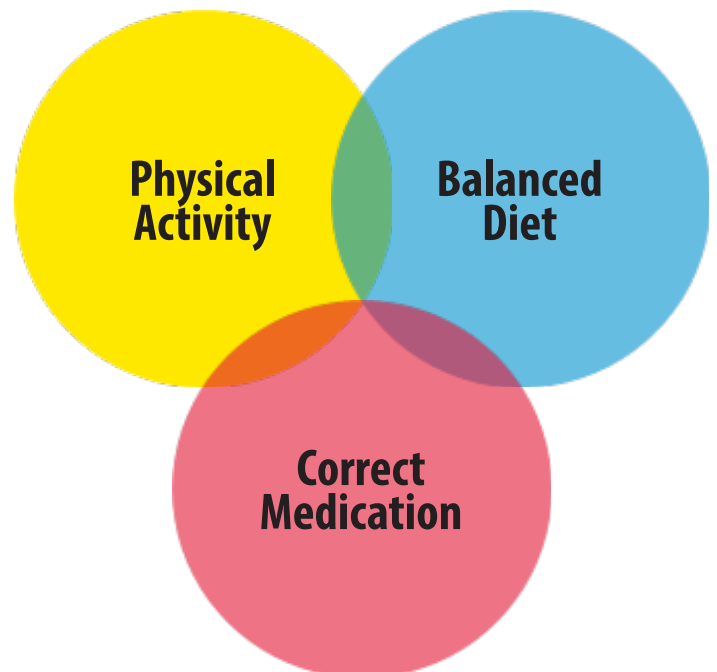


Figure 1. Three key components for managing diabetes.

Physical Activity

When people are physically active, their bodies use energy, which lowers their blood-glucose levels. Regular movement can be a powerful tool for managing blood-glucose levels. The American Diabetes Association suggests a goal of 150 minutes of exercise each week. Spreading this time out over five to seven days helps to fit exercise into a schedule. Consider taking 10-minute walks multiple times a day, such as after meals or snacks. The ADA encourages not going longer than 48 hours between sessions of movement to keep muscles in a state of using glucose, helping to manage levels in the blood even post-exercise. Physical activity helps manage levels of glucose in the blood and supports heart health. Check with a health-care provider before starting or changing activity levels.

Balanced Diet

Food has a direct impact on blood-glucose levels. With a diabetes diagnosis, an individual might have to be more conscious of what they are eating. Carbohydrates have the biggest impact on blood-glucose levels, but protein and fat play a role in helping to balance them. Dietary guidance for managing diabetes may include:

- Have meals and snacks at the same time each day.
- Consider consistent carbohydrate amounts at meals and snacks.
- Balance carbohydrate intake with protein and fat to minimize the spike in blood-glucose levels.

There are different options for managing diabetes with diet, and one way may work better than another. A diabetes educator or registered dietitian can assist in deciding what might work best.

Medication

Some forms of diabetes can be managed with diet and movement. Others will require medication in addition to lifestyle management. Medication may be oral prescriptions, an injection, or a combination treatment. It is important to follow the provider's instructions for the medication. Before making diet or activity changes, talk with a health-care provider as it may impact medication dosage and frequency.

Summary

Diabetes management includes these daily steps:

- Be physically active. Find joyful movement to increase the likelihood of regularly engaging in activity.
- Follow a balanced diet that supports management of blood-glucose levels.
- Check blood glucose the recommended number of times.
- Take medication as prescribed.

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