Introduction
Keeping active and healthy is a very important part of managing diabetes and preventing the long-term complications of diabetes. This leaflet will explain how eating a balanced diet and keeping active can make a big difference to how you feel, how you look and how healthy your body is.

Benefits of activity
**Weight control**: if you need to lose weight, the magic formula is still to eat less and be more active. Physical activity reduces the amount of fat in your body and this is important for insulin sensitivity; that is how well your body uses its own insulin or insulin injections. Even maintaining and not gaining more weight will benefit your health and small increases in activity can help to kick-start a weight management programme. Weight gained around the stomach carries a high risk of heart disease and activity is particularly effective at reducing your weight.

**Reducing risk**: high blood glucose levels increase the risks of circulatory problems such as stroke and heart disease. Physical activity improves circulation, strengthens heart muscle, and helps to control your blood glucose levels. Regular moderate levels of activity can also help to lower your blood pressure. Good control of your blood glucose and blood pressure can
reduce the risk of the long-term complications of diabetes. Weight bearing activities such as walking or lifting will increase bone density and help prevent osteoporosis. Stretching activities will help your joints and muscles to stay mobile.

**Stress relief:** physical activity may not seem like the most relaxing thing to do when you are tired and overwhelmed with too much to do. However, something as simple as regular walking, at a brisk pace, is a very effective way of reducing depression, giving you more energy and making you feel more able to cope. Being physically active will also cut down your dependence on less healthy reactions to stress like overeating, smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

**What sort of activity?**

**Moderate activity:** should make you warm and breathe harder. It doesn’t need to be vigorous and you should be able to carry on a conversation.

There are many types of activity that fit easily into the day and count towards the goal of 30 minutes of moderate activity a day. You don’t need to do formal exercise, for example try a five minute brisk walk, active housework like hoovering, gardening (mowing), or walking around, and up and down stairs.

Armchair exercises can build strength and maintain mobility which is very important, especially if walking is not possible.
Brisk activity: if you haven’t been active for a while, avoid intense activity that makes you out of breath.

If you fancy the idea of trying something new, try cycling, or see what’s on at your local leisure or community centre.

There may be swimming, or classes in yoga, dancing, keep fit and racquet sports.

You could try an activity with friends or family and give new meaning to the idea of an active social life.

Before you start any new activity, talk to your doctor, especially if you:

- Are taking any medications for diabetes or heart disease.
- Have any complications of diabetes, such as circulation or eye problems.
- Are not sure which activities are suitable.
- Have any conditions which restrict your mobility or ability to be active.
- Need more information.

You may need to talk to your diabetes team once you are active on a regular basis, in case your diabetes medication needs to be adjusted.
Join Diabetes UK

Membership of Diabetes UK gives you:

- A bi-monthly members magazine, *Balance*, packed with news and information

- A wide range of booklets designed to give you the information you need to lead a full and healthy life

- Diabetes UK Careline for confidential support and information
  Freephone: 0845 120 2960
  Textphone: 020 7424 1031
  (during office hours)

- Over 400 Diabetes UK groups across the country who offer support and a chance to meet other local people with diabetes

- Diabetes UK Services insurance and financial products designed to meet the needs of people with diabetes

- The opportunity to help yourself and others with diabetes in the UK.

To become a member of Diabetes UK simply complete the attached form and send it to:

Diabetes UK, Freepost NH2604, Northampton NN3 6BR.

Registered charity no. 215199
Direct Debit Guarantee

- This guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that take part in the Direct Debit scheme.
- The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own bank or building society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, Diabetes UK will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by Diabetes UK or your bank/building society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time, by writing to your bank or building society. Please send a copy of your letter to Diabetes UK.

Diabetes UK

The charity for people with diabetes
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Website www.diabetes.org.uk
Registered charity no. 215199
Activity and blood glucose control

- Choose fruit and vegetables rather than high fat or sugary snacks if you are hungry after activity, and to help restore your fluid and blood glucose level (see below if you have a hypo).
- Drink water during and after activity.
- Test your blood glucose level after unaccustomed or vigorous activity as your blood glucose level may take up to 36 hours to settle into a familiar pattern.

Hypoglycaemia (hypo)

If your diabetes is treated with insulin or sulphonylurea tablets you should monitor your blood glucose level carefully before, during and after activity to keep it within the normal range of 4 to 7mmol/l. If your blood glucose level is very low you should have a sugary drink or glucose tablets before you start, and keep them handy throughout. You are unlikely to have a hypo if you are on other diabetes tablets. When you have been active, have a bedtime snack to prevent night-time hypos and monitor blood glucose levels on waking.

Hyperglycaemia

If your diabetes is treated with insulin and your blood glucose level is higher than normal (or over 15mmol/l), you may need to delay activity until your blood glucose level comes down or your insulin begins to work. Generally, if your blood glucose levels are higher than normal, you should also check for ketones and if the test is positive, do not exercise and seek medical advice.