

Importance of Exercise



Why is exercise important?

Exercise helps keep your child's blood sugar under control. You should make a special effort to plan daily exercise for your child. Exercise may help prevent diabetes that occurs later in life (type 2). Here are some reasons why exercise is beneficial:

- **Exercise makes you feel better.** Children who exercise tend not to tire as easily and feel happier and healthier.
- **Exercise helps keep the body in good shape.** Lack of activity leads to health problems such as obesity and heart trouble. Exercise helps burn extra calories and helps your child keep a normal weight.
- **Exercise helps keep the heart rate (pulse) and blood pressure lower.** People who exercise have healthy hearts and the heart doesn't have to pump as hard. Low blood pressure helps prevent heart problems as well as other complications of diabetes such as eye and kidney problems.
- **Exercise helps keep blood fat levels normal.** Many children with diabetes have high levels of the blood fats (cholesterol and triglycerides). High blood fat levels can lead to early aging of blood vessels. Exercise and good blood sugar control are the best ways to reduce blood fat levels.



Exercise is very important for children who have type 2 diabetes or are at risk for type 2 diabetes. If your child is overweight, losing weight by eating less and exercising more can reduce the risk for developing type 2 diabetes by more than half.

Which kinds of exercise are best?



The best exercise is one your child likes. It is easier to form a habit of exercising if your child enjoys the activity. Your child needs to choose an aerobic exercise. Only aerobic exercises help the heart. Aerobic exercises include jogging, walking, swimming, or bicycling. They should be done for 30 minutes or longer. When activities such as weight lifting are done in short bursts with rests in between, they are considered strength-building exercises, not aerobic exercise.

How often should my child exercise?

To improve the health of the heart, your child should have at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 5 or more times per week. The more exercise a person gets, the more fat is burned. Some people burn more calories with their exercise than others. This is partly related to how hard the person exercises. If weight loss is one of the goals for your child, it may be necessary to exercise harder or for a longer period to reach the desired goals.

