

Your guide to

MOVING MORE

when you have diabetes



DiABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

WELCOME

If you're reading this page, then congratulations! It means you have taken an important step on your journey to move more by finding out why it's important to keep active when you have diabetes, and learning how to do so.

Whether you're brand new to moving more, or you're just looking for new ways to stay motivated – our guide is packed full of information, advice and inspiration to help you build physical activity into your life, in a way that suits you. Plus, we've provided space towards the end of the guide for you to create your own activity plan and track your progress over 10 weeks, so you can reflect on what you're learning along the way.

By making a few small changes, you can start your journey towards a stronger, fitter you and give your health a real boost.

Let's take the first step together.

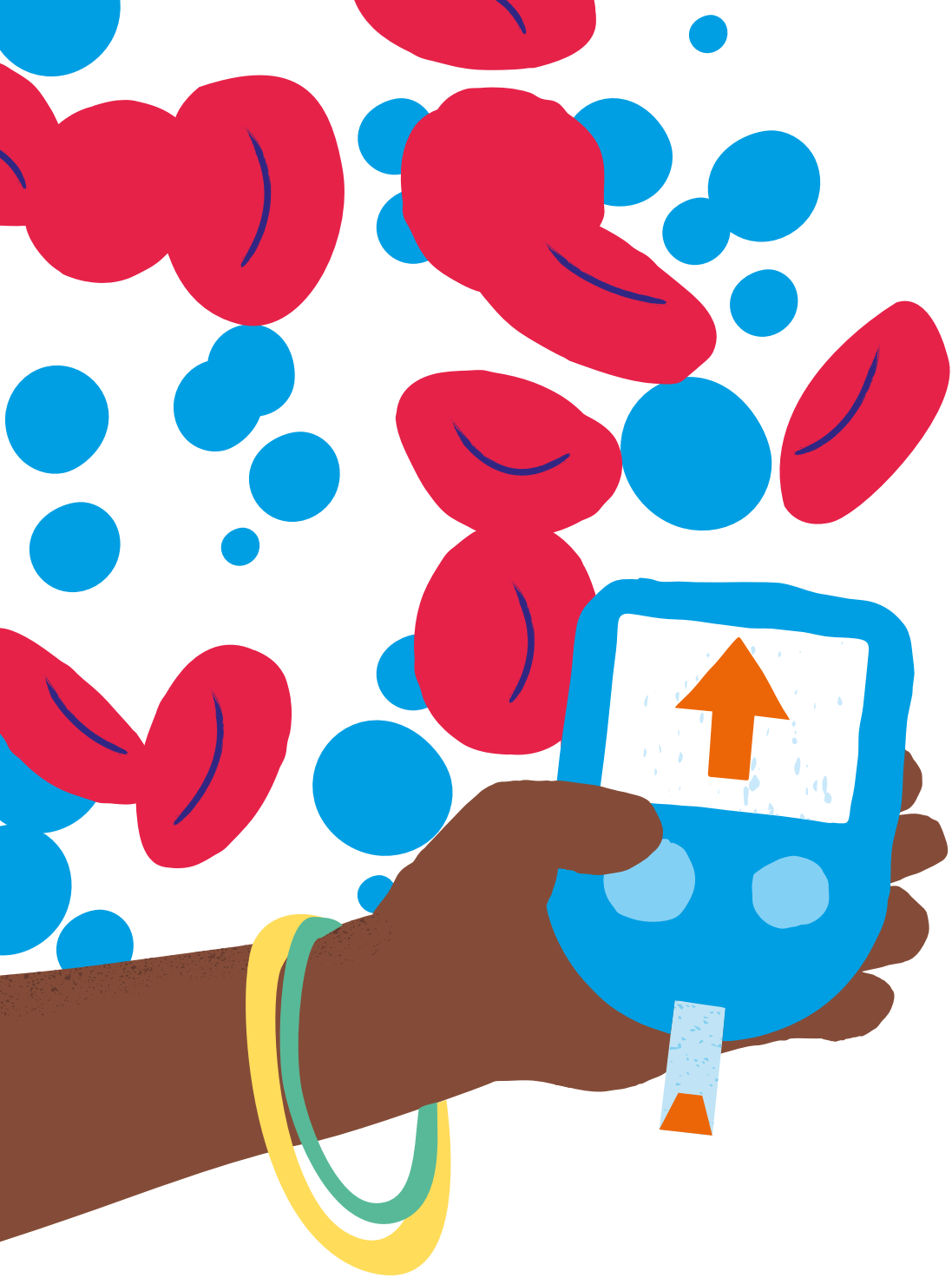


Talk to us

Our trained advisors are available to give you one-to-one support, helping you to get started on your journey to moving more. Call us on **0345 123 2399**

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WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a serious condition where your blood glucose level, also known as blood sugar level, is too high. It can happen when your body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin it produces isn't effective. Or, when your body can't produce any insulin at all.

There are two main types of diabetes: **type 1** and **type 2**. Other types of diabetes include gestational diabetes, and there are many other rarer types too. What all types of diabetes have in common is that they cause people to have too much glucose in their blood.

We all need some glucose – it's what gives us energy. And we also need a hormone called insulin. It's made by our pancreas and allows the glucose in our blood to enter our cells and fuel our bodies.

If you don't have diabetes, your pancreas senses when glucose has entered your bloodstream and releases the right amount of insulin, so the glucose can get into your cells. But if you have diabetes, this system doesn't work.

Depending on the type of diabetes you have, you may treat it with medication, such as insulin. But making changes to your lifestyle, like moving more, can make a big difference to how you feel and how you manage your condition. That's why we're here to support you on your journey to get moving.

MOVING MORE WHEN YOU HAVE DIABETES

Moving more is good for people living with diabetes. Whether you feel able to go for a run or a swim, or can manage some arm stretches or on-the-spot walking while the kettle boils, it all makes a difference.

We know that diabetes can affect you in unpredictable ways, making it hard to know how you'll feel or what type of activity you should do.

That's why it's important to remember that the small victories count. It doesn't matter if you try something new or just do that little bit more of something you already do. Each step you take towards moving more can help with managing your condition.

You might be worried that being physically active will be too tiring, or make your diabetes harder to manage. And if you're someone who gets hypoglycaemia, also known as hypos, you're probably worried about how moving more will affect your blood sugar levels. There may also be days where you don't feel like doing much, or the weather gets you down.

Your worries are understandable, but we're here to bust some myths and show you some of the important benefits of being active when you have diabetes.



How can moving more help you?

- It helps the body use insulin better.
- It helps you look after your blood pressure, which is important as high blood pressure means you're more at risk of diabetes complications.
- It helps you improve your cholesterol level.
- It helps you lose weight if you need to, and keep the weight off after you've lost it.
- It gives you energy and helps you get a good night's sleep.
- It helps your joints and flexibility.
- It helps to reduce stress levels.
- It helps improve your HbA1c if you have type 2 diabetes.
- It helps your mind as well as your body, as moving more can lead to the release of feel-good hormones called endorphins, which can lift your mood.

And remember – you don't have to join a gym or pay money to move more. What's important is finding something you enjoy.

Putting type 2 diabetes into remission is now a real possibility for many people. This means that your blood sugar levels are below the diabetes range, usually without you needing to take any diabetes medication.

The strongest evidence we have suggests that diabetes is mainly put into remission by weight loss, but keeping moving and finding new ways to get active is also an important step in your remission journey.



Remission can feel like a fairy-tale. But this is something that can happen to real people. The magic is in what you do.

Shivali – read her full story at diabetes.org.uk/shivali-moves





Top tip

If you want to push yourself, use tins or cans as weights when getting active.



MOVING MORE WITH DIABETES COMPLICATIONS

If you have diabetes complications, like problems with your eyes and feet, or you're living with multiple health conditions, you may need to think a bit more carefully about the movements you choose.

For example, you may need to avoid high-intensity activity and heavy lifting. But there are other gentler, low-impact exercises you can try, like swimming or walking.

If you have problems with your feet, such as neuropathy or foot ulcers, you might need to avoid certain types of weight-bearing activity like jogging. Chair-based exercises might be better for you, like raising your legs one after the other or lifting cans of food while you're sitting down.

It's also important to use suitable footwear when exercising, and make sure you regularly check your feet for any changes in the way they look or feel.

If you have issues with your eyes, like retinopathy, gentle movements are usually OK to do.

Remember that a little bit of movement has so many benefits, so do as much as you can and reward yourself for any small changes you make. It's really important to take care of your body, as well as keep active, so speak to your healthcare team for more advice on what's best for you before starting anything new. They can help you decide what's safe.

MANAGING YOUR BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS

Although being physically active can lower blood sugar levels, moving more can affect your blood sugars in different ways. Depending on the type of activity you're doing, you might experience your blood sugar level going up or down.

We know this may leave you feeling worried about starting something new, especially if you treat your diabetes with medication that puts you at risk of hypos. But learning more about what happens before, during and after you get active can also help to ease some of this worry.

More info

If you have hypo-anxiety or you're concerned about getting hypos when getting active, visit diabetes.org.uk/hypo-anxiety-moves or give our physical activity advisors a call. You'll get personalised, one-to-one support from our trained advisors who will work together with you to make positive steps towards moving more.

Call **0345 123 2399** Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm or email helpline@diabetes.org.uk for more advice about how to deal with your feelings.

Before moving more

If you check your blood sugars yourself, whether that's using diabetes technology or test strips, try doing this more often around the time you are starting to move. Trial and error can help you to spot patterns, but remember to stay safe. If you begin moving when your blood sugar levels are high, you may experience dehydration and tiredness. This can make it harder for you to do your activity, so it's important to drink more and keep hydrated.

To help you get started, we've put together a set of general guidelines around blood sugar levels and moving more for people who test their blood sugars. You may find them useful to refer to when you are preparing to get active.



Starting blood sugar levels	Recommendations
Less than 4mmol/l	Your blood sugar levels are too low and you need to have your usual hypo treatment, such as glucose tablets or sugary drinks, followed by some starchy carbs, such as a banana or a cereal bar, to stop your levels going low again. Wait until your levels are above 5mmol/l before you start to get active.
4-7mmol/l	This is usually the healthy target range you should aim for. If you are going to start moving, you may need to have a snack with starchy carbs beforehand to make sure your blood sugar levels don't go too low. If you aren't having a snack, try to check your blood sugars regularly during your activity.
7-13mmol/l	You can begin your activity. As different types of movements can cause your blood sugars to go higher or lower, try to check them regularly during your activity.
Above 13mmol/l	<p>Your blood sugar levels are above target levels and getting active could cause them to rise even higher. It's important to speak to your healthcare team as you may need to think more about the type of activity you are planning to do and possible changes to your treatment.</p> <p>If you're not sure why your blood sugar levels are high and you've been taught how to test for ketones, you should test your urine or blood for ketones and follow the advice from your healthcare team about how to avoid becoming unwell.</p>

These recommendations are only guidance, and your individual experience when moving more may be different. You should speak to your healthcare team about what's best for you.

If you've had a severe hypo in the last 24 hours, do not do any physical activity. If you've had a hypo in the last 24 hours, your risk of having another hypo will be higher so it's important to be careful when moving more. Try not to do any activity on your own, and make sure you follow our tips below.

Managing your blood sugar levels while moving more

Some days you might do exactly the same type of activity and eat the same foods, but your blood sugar levels may be completely different to what you'd expect. This is completely normal, but we know it can be really frustrating.

Although everyone manages their diabetes differently, these tips can be a useful starting point to build your confidence and get you moving:

- If you normally check your blood sugars, keep a record of what happens when you're being active and show this to your diabetes nurse or doctor.
- If you're at risk of hypos, keep plenty of fast-acting, hypo-friendly carbohydrates, like sugary drinks and glucose tablets, to hand – as well as a snack with some carbs in, eg a sandwich, a piece of fruit or a cereal bar.
- Wear your diabetes ID so people around you can help if they need to.
- If you use insulin to treat your diabetes, you might need to make changes to your dose when exercising. It's best to speak to your healthcare team for more information, as they'll be able to look at your activity levels and help you make the right changes to your dose.

Blood sugar levels after moving more

Some people may find that their blood sugar levels go up after exercise, while others find that moving more lowers their levels. Because different types of activities can affect your blood sugar levels in different ways, it's important to check your blood sugars after you finish exercising. You may also need to continue to check them for up to 24 hours after this.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Living with a long-term health condition has its ups and downs, not only physically, but emotionally too.

Diabetes can be exhausting and overwhelming. This can cause long periods of feeling low, which may mean that it can be difficult for you to find the motivation to move more. There may also be times when you don't feel like doing much. This might be because of the weather, your mood that day or other commitments like work or your family. Or because you're living with multiple health conditions, or dealing with the challenges of pre-existing mental health conditions.

These thoughts and feelings are all understandable, and it's important to remember that you don't have to deal with your emotions alone.

We're here for you.

As many as

**40% OF PEOPLE
WITH DIABETES**

experience emotional or psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety and diabetes-related emotional distress.



Moving more can benefit your mind as well as your body, as it can help you to:

- reduce your stress levels
- improve your low mood
- increase your self-esteem
- improve your sleep
- decrease anxiety
- reduce your risk of depression
- feel happier.

Keeping these benefits in mind might help you find the motivation to get moving.

For more support, visit diabetes.org.uk/emotions-moves

People who use insulin or medications that can lower blood sugar levels often say that the biggest barrier to moving more is a fear of hypos. Always keep plenty of fast-acting, hypo-friendly carbohydrates, like sugary drinks and glucose tablets, to hand just in case you need them. This can help build your confidence and reassure you that you will be safe while being more active.

If you still have anxiety around hypos, make sure you check your blood sugar levels regularly to learn how your body reacts to certain movements.

Talk to us

Get personalised, one-to-one support with moving more by speaking to our trained advisors. They'll work together with you to find new ways to overcome your barriers and build up your confidence, so you can take positive steps towards getting active in a way that suits you. Call **0345 123 2399** Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, or email helpline@diabetes.org.uk to get in touch.

Join our forum

There are many other people with diabetes looking to introduce more movement into their life and reaching out to them can be a great help. You can read their experiences in our online forum at diabetes.org.uk/support-moves, or sign up to take part in the conversations yourself.

It can be tough to make changes to your lifestyle alone, but joining a community can really help you feel supported throughout the process.

Find your local support group

We run local diabetes support groups to bring people living with diabetes together. Sharing tips and stories with like-minded people could help you learn and figure out what's best for you, while getting active with others can often give you that extra bit of motivation you need. Use our postcode finder at diabetes.org.uk/group-moves and check out which activities they're running.

Beginning to move more can seem overwhelming at first, but most people are surprised when they actually start because it isn't as daunting as they thought it would be. So, give it a go and keep an open mind. You might end up enjoying the thing that you thought would be scary.



WHICH MOVEMENTS ARE GOOD FOR YOU?

We understand that moving more can feel like a big challenge. So, start with what feels achievable to you and remember that there isn't one type of movement that's best for everyone with diabetes – it's about finding what works for you.

This can depend on lots of things, like what you enjoy, where you are and how much time you have. Try to think about how activity can fit in with your life, and not the other way round.

Walking may be a good activity to start with as you can do it anywhere, at any time and it's free. It's also easy on joints and suitable for all levels of fitness. Or if you feel like you need to start off at an easier pace, try standing during a TV advert. If you can manage it, work towards standing for the whole advert break, then to walking on the spot. If you're not able to move your legs, or you find it difficult, you could start with some chair-based exercises to get your body moving. When you feel ready to do a bit more, you could try to fit in activities that improve your muscle strength too, like:

- adding weights to your stretches
- carrying the shopping
- yoga or pilates.



There's no need to buy any equipment. Think about what you already have at home: a chair or sofa for seated exercises, tins of beans for weights and a towel for resistance exercises. Or, why not take five minutes out of your day to dance to your favourite song? Music can be a great way to get active, especially if you're not in the mood to move. It can stop you concentrating on the time and help you feel motivated.

If you have stiff or painful joints, you might want to visit your local swimming pool for a swim, or see if they hold exercise classes. The water can help to support your joints while you move, while the movement can strengthen your muscles and improve coordination.

Staying connected with others can also give you the motivation you need when you're having a bad day and don't feel like getting active. When that's the case, why don't you ask a family member or neighbour to get moving with you?

Turn the page for more **inspiration and ideas** about how to introduce more movement into your life.



I'd never have imagined that a brisk walk every day could have such amazing benefits in so many different ways. I've enjoyed it, I've lost weight and I've improved my diabetes control.

David – read his full story at diabetes.org.uk/david-moves



GET INSPIRED TO MOVE MORE





WHICH ACTIVITIES DO YOU WANT TO TRY?



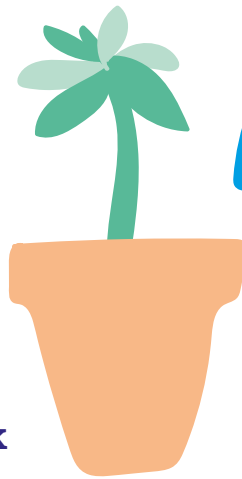
Keeping active at home

- on the spot walking
- DIY – is it time to tackle that shelf you’ve been putting off?
- arm and leg stretches
- hoovering your home
- washing your car
- dancing to music
- gardening, if you have a garden. If not, can you repot some house plants while standing up?

Keeping active on the move

- getting off the bus or tube one stop earlier
- parking further away from your destination
- taking the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- walking the dog
- cycling
- use a free outdoor gym.

Visit diabetes.org.uk/celene-moves to watch Celene or diabetes.org.uk/learning-zone-moves to sign up to our Learning Zone.



Keeping active at work

- walking meetings
- standing when you're on the phone or using a standing desk
- chair-based exercises
- stretching for five minutes after every meeting.

Online activities

Everyone's different, and some people find video workouts or apps helpful to keep them motivated. If that sounds like something you're interested in, head over to our YouTube channel to watch Celene, our Physical Activity Coordinator, take you through simple movements you can try from your very own home.

Or, why not give our Learning Zone a try? It's a free tool packed full of information from healthcare professionals that's tailored to you and your diabetes, and it also contains tips and advice from people living with diabetes too. For example, in our three physical activity courses, you'll:

- understand how moving more can help you and your diabetes
- find which activity would suit you and your lifestyle
- build an activity plan that you can stick to.

MAKE MOVING MORE A HABIT

Here are some top tips from personal trainer and Diabetes UK ambassador Lavina Mehta MBE to help you build physical activity into your routine.

My top tips:

- Add your workout to your diary, like you would any other meeting or appointment, so you're more likely to commit to carrying it out. It also helps if you do it at the same time each time, so it becomes part of your routine.
- Track your progress and remember to celebrate your achievements. If you hit a milestone, such as a weekly workout, consider rewarding yourself for your efforts.
- Write down 'snack-sized' goals that are realistic and achievable. Examples include:
 - doing 10 squats or star jumps every time you wait for the kettle to boil
 - 'stair-snacking' – walking up or down three flights of stairs, three times a day before each meal
 - going for a 10 minute 'walk snack' after each meal
 - setting an alarm every two hours to remind yourself to get up and move for five minutes or walk around your home.
- Be patient, stay consistent and most importantly – enjoy the journey!



My concept of 'exercise snacking' can really help to break down the barriers of time, cost and motivation to moving more. It's free, accessible, easy and quick to build into your everyday lives. Think of them as a treat for your body and mind!

For example, rather than doing 30-60 minutes all in one go, break your activity into smaller 'bitesize' amounts of movement throughout the day and gradually build up.

FIVE WAYS TO MOVE MORE WHILE SITTING DOWN

Repeat each
activity for
one minute

Before you start, make sure you are sitting as upright as possible, with your feet on the ground or a hard surface.

1

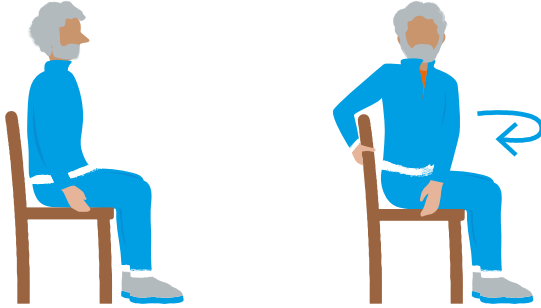
Arm curls



1. Start with your arms hanging naturally. Keep your elbows by your sides and raise your right hand towards your right shoulder.
2. Bring your right arm back down and repeat with your left arm.

2

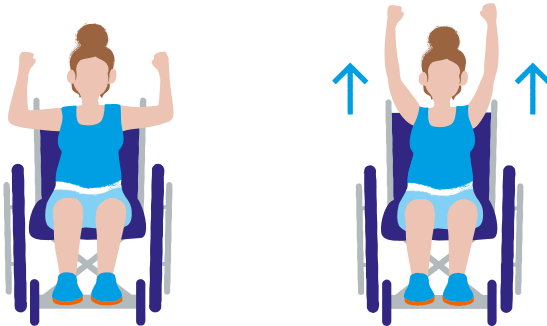
Chair twists



1. Slowly turn your upper body to the right while keeping your hips facing forwards.
2. Count to five and then return to the middle so you are facing forwards.
3. Repeat, but now turn to the left.

3

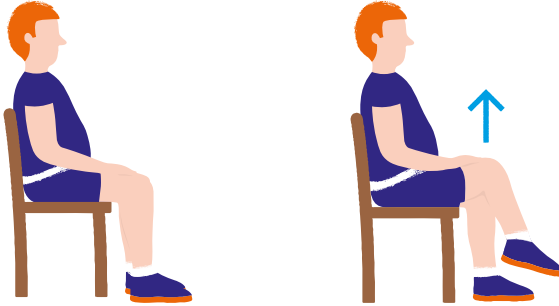
Upward punches



1. Put your arms out to your sides with your elbows bent and knuckles pointing up to the ceiling. Your thumbs should face each other.
2. Slowly punch upwards and then bring your arms back to the starting position.

4

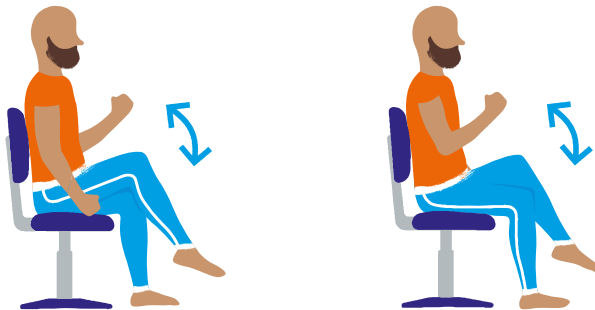
Knee lifts



1. Lift your right knee off the ground and then place it back on the floor.
2. Repeat with your left knee.

5

Marching



1. Continue with the knee lifts, but this time introduce alternate arm curls each time. This means your right leg should lift at the same time your left arm bends.

Always check with your GP before starting a new physical activity programme.

EATING WELL AND MOVING MORE

As you start to move more and feel healthier, you might want to know more about how healthy eating can complement your exercises.

There's no specific diet for diabetes. However, the foods you eat not only make a difference to how you manage your diabetes, they also affect how well you feel and how much energy you have. That's why it's really important to make sure you're eating well when introducing new activity into your routine.

A healthy balanced diet will make sure your body gets a good range of nutrients and can help you manage your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. This will also help to reduce your risk of developing diabetes complications, heart problems, strokes and other health conditions including certain types of cancers.

If you're not sure where to start when it comes to making changes to what or how you eat:

- Head to our online recipe finder at diabetes.org.uk/recipe-moves for new ideas and inspiration. All our dishes have been checked and approved by a specialist team of dietitians, so you'll always know what's in your food.
- Get your copy of **Eating well with diabetes**, a guide packed with answers to your biggest questions about diabetes and food. Download or order your copy for free at diabetes.org.uk/eating-well-moves

MINDFUL EXERCISE

If you're feeling a bit low and are looking for an activity to re-energise both your body and mind, why don't you go out for a walk and do the five senses exercise?

It's a very simple exercise of noticing things that you can see, feel, hear, smell and taste. Take the guide with you and jot down these things in the table below. There are no right or wrong answers.

5 things you can SEE For example: "I see a leafy tree".	4 things you can FEEL For example: "I feel the wind on my face".	3 things you can HEAR For example: "I hear people talking".	2 things you can SMELL For example: "I smell freshly cut grass".	1 thing you can TASTE For example: "I taste coffee".

BREATHING EXERCISE

If you're feeling stressed or anxious, doing some breathing exercises can help you feel more relaxed.



Inhale slowly as you count to four in your head.



Hold the breath as you count to four.



Exhale slowly and count to four.

You can do this anywhere, even when you go out for a walk.

YOUR ACTIVITY PLANNER

Here is your 10-week activity planner. Use this space and the questions on the following pages to record your journey and keep track of how you've been feeling. This can help you to stay motivated to move a little bit more each day.

	Movements I'd like to try this week For example: "I'm going for a walk in the park".	What might get in the way? For example: "I might lack motivation".	
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			
Week 7			
Week 8			
Week 9			
Week 10			



How will I overcome what might get in the way?

For example: "I'm going to ask someone I know to join me".

Movements I carried out

For example: "I walked for 30 minutes in the morning".

How did I feel afterwards?

For example: "I'm proud I managed to go for a walk".

MY STARTING POINT

You might find it useful to think about where you are now and how your life could improve if you start to move more. Remembering why you want to get active can keep you going when you need some extra motivation.

1. Think about the reasons why you want to become more active.

For example: “I want to improve the way I manage my diabetes” or “I want to be more active for my grandkids”. Try to think about what’s important to you.

2. On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about moving more?

1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not confident

Very confident

3. Think about how life might be different if you move more.

For example: "I could feel less stressed and improve my self-confidence".

4. What are your reasons for not moving more?

For example: "I will have to take time out of an already busy day".

5. What steps can you take to increase your confidence to move more?

For example: "I will ask a friend to join me".



Questions

If you have any questions while reading the guide, there's some space for you at the end to note down anything you might want to get more advice about.



I've realised how important it is to keep moving and how easy it can be to introduce more movement into your life. I've been setting myself an hour each day, from 3pm to 4pm, where I do half an hour of physical activity and half an hour of relaxation. I find that if you set aside the time and plan it into your day, it helps you to stay on track and get it done.

Chrissie – read her full story at diabetes.org.uk/chrissie-moves



MY HALFWAY POINT

Well done! You are halfway through your 10-week journey towards a healthier you.

After five weeks of moving more, turn back to your starting point on page 36 and see how far you've come.

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about moving more now?

1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not confident

Very confident

2. Is there a difference in what you can do now compared to the beginning?

For example: "I can now walk around the block without feeling tired". List any changes, particularly the way you feel.

3. What went well and what was challenging?

For example: “I enjoyed doing a yoga class online. A challenge for me was the bad internet connection”.

4. What do you want to do differently going forward?

For example: “I need to check the weather forecast before planning my walk”.

5. How can you make physical activity a long-term habit?

For example: “find an exercise buddy, schedule in activity so it’s part of my weekly routine”.

AT THE END OF YOUR 10 WEEKS

Congratulations on moving more for 10 weeks!

We know that starting to move more isn't always easy. We hope that the tips in this guide have helped you to find new and fun ways to do so.

1. Now let's look back at the progress you've made so far.

List your biggest achievements:

2. Is there a difference in what you can do now compared to the beginning?

List any changes, particularly the way you feel.



Ongoing progress

If our activity planner helped you to keep track and stay motivated, download a new one from diabetes.org.uk/planner-moves and start planning your next 10 weeks of movement today.

3. How did you overcome any challenges you had during this time?

4. How will you continue to move more?

Here are some questions to help you think about what you might like to do next, as well as space to list your future goals.

- Could you follow the same 10-week plan and increase how long you are doing your activity for?
- Could you create a new 10-week plan based around new activities?
- Could you find out what classes are available at your local leisure centre or gym?
- Could you sign up to a physical activity challenge or event?



After I started developing problems with my toes, my diabetes nurse pushed me to move so I took the first step to becoming more active and bought myself a bike. Nowadays, I can't wait to get out on it! I've given up driving and tend to cycle everywhere. The way I look at it is if I can make these changes, even though I never thought I could, then so can so many people out there.

Brian, a UK Wide Cycle Ride participant – read his full story at diabetes.org.uk/brian-moves

PUSH YOURSELF TO MOVE MORE

Sign up to one of our life-changing fundraising events and continue your journey towards a healthier you while also raising money for a cause close to your heart.

Taking place at different times throughout the year, with different targets or distances to choose from, there's something for everyone:

One Million Step Challenge

Join our community of steppers to take on our biggest walking challenge at your own pace, wherever you are.

Swim22

We'll support you every stroke, length and mile of the way as you swim towards a stronger, fitter you.

UK Wide Cycle Ride

Take your fitness up a gear with our virtual coast-to-coast cycling challenge.

Month of Miles

Run or walk a month of miles when it suits you, and prepare to feel healthier in body and mind.

Find out more at diabetes.org.uk/events-moves

YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

To help us make sure we are providing the right information and advice that you need, we'd love to hear a bit more about you and your activity levels. Head to diabetes.org.uk/survey-moves to fill in our short survey, so we can continue to be there for everyone living with diabetes.



CONTACT US

Call our helpline for personalised advice about getting active. Our trained advisors will work together with you to set realistic and achievable goals on your journey to move more, and will be there for you every step of the way.

Call **0345 123 2399** from Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, or email helpline@diabetes.org.uk to arrange a chat.

We also have a free support forum where you can exchange knowledge and experiences with other people with diabetes, family and carers. You may not feel that you need advice, but you may be able to share some of your own and help others

diabetes.org.uk/forum-moves

We'd love to stay in touch and to hear about the changes you've made

[@DiabetesUK](https://twitter.com/DiabetesUK)



Find more information on moving more with diabetes
diabetes.org.uk/exercise-moves

We welcome your feedback. If any information in this guide has been particularly helpful or if you would like to suggest any improvements, please send your comments to: helpline@diabetes.org.uk or write to us at: Diabetes UK Helpline, Wells Lawrence House, 126 Back Church Lane, London E1 1FH

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