

Q. How can I lose weight if I have diabetes?

A. Losing weight, even 10-15 pounds, can have a significant impact on your blood sugar control, complications from diabetes, and overall health. Managing your weight, even with diabetes, is achievable by balancing the equation of energy in (calories eaten) with energy spent (through physical activity and increased lifestyle activity).



- **Talk to your doctor.** Before beginning any exercise or weight loss program, it is very important you discuss this with your doctor.
- **Be ready to change.** Your success depends on whether you are really ready to commit yourself to the lifestyle changes that are necessary to improve your health.
- **Take small steps.** Losing weight and managing diabetes is the result of lifestyle changes over months or years. Start with SMART goals – ones that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. You can access a SMART health action plan at www.wellsource.info/wn/Smart-Action-Plan.pdf
- **Be physically active.** Physical activity improves blood sugar control by making your body more sensitive to insulin and by using blood sugar for energy. You can do this by being more active throughout the day (e.g., taking the stairs, parking in the farthest parking spot) and by exercising regularly.

Since you have diabetes, you should follow the American Diabetes Association recommendations which state that you should talk to your healthcare team about activities that will be safe for you. The type of exercises you do will depend on the condition of your heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, feet, and nervous system. It's a good idea to check your blood sugar levels before and after exercise so you can better regulate your intensity. If you feel hungry, nervous, shaky, or sweaty while you are exercising, stop and check your blood sugar. Your doctor can give you more details about monitoring and regulating blood sugar levels.
- **Stay hydrated.** One way the body attempts to lower high blood sugar is by getting rid of it in the urine. This causes urination to become more frequent resulting in possible dehydration. Be sure to drink healthy fluids, such as water, throughout the day, especially when exercising.
- **Focus on healthy foods.** Emphasize fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, low-fat or nonfat dairy, and lean meats when planning meals. They are lower in calories

and saturated fats and higher in complex carbohydrates and fiber. Aim for at least 20-35 grams of fiber each day – more if you can. Research showed that diabetics who ate at least 50 grams of fiber daily controlled their blood sugar more than those who ate less. Healthy fats are mono- and polyunsaturated fat (e.g., olive oil, canola oil, avocados, and nuts).

- To **reduce temptation**, stock your kitchen with foods that support your goals of healthy weight and blood sugar management. Before you go to the grocery store, prepare a list and stick to it!
- **Cut back.** Decreasing your daily calories by 250-500 calories can result in ½-1 pound of fat loss each week. Skipping meals can cause blood sugar levels to become unstable. Eating smaller more frequent meals can help to maintain blood sugar levels while controlling portion size. Eating fewer calories means that your blood sugars will need to be watched closely. You may need to work with your doctor or a dietician when making nutrition changes.
- **Know your plate.** Use a smaller plate (10 inches across or less) then divide that plate in half. Then, divide one half into two quarters. Fill the largest section (half of your plate) with high-fiber complex carbohydrates (e.g., non-starchy vegetables). Fill one of the quarters with starchy foods (e.g., whole-grain bread or brown rice). Lastly, fill the remaining quarter with protein (e.g., low-fat meats or meat substitutes). Read more about portion control at www.wellsource.info/wn/Serving-Sizes.pdf
- **Keep track.** People who have lost weight and kept it off have kept a record of their weight, what they eat and drink, and how much and what kind of physical activity they get.
- **Reward your progress.** Every accomplishment – no matter how small – deserves a reward. Make a list of non-food rewards to help keep you motivated, even on the toughest days.
- **Be patient.** Making changes takes time and habits die hard. Accomplishing your goal for a week or even a month doesn't mean it's permanent. It might take months before a healthy choice replaces your old way of living. But by consciously choosing to perform your new habit consistently, it will eventually become natural for you.

For more information on diabetes-specific weight management visit:

American Diabetes Association www.diabetes.org
 American Dietetic Association www.eatright.org

