
Fitness Tips

by Cari Draft Elliott, BS, CPT - ACE-Certified Personal Trainer

Can exercise cure my type 2 diabetes?

Question: *I've been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and I'm being told that exercising more can cure my condition. What kind of exercise should I be doing?*

Answer: Yikes, I've never heard of type 2 diabetes actually being "cured"! Perhaps what they meant to tell you is that you are in the early stages of type 2 diabetes, and lifestyle changes (made with advice from your doctor and dietician) could sometimes correct the condition or significantly delay the progression of the disease and the health complications that can develop with diabetes. More than 1.5 million new cases of type 2 diabetes are diagnosed in the U.S. every year, and as obesity rates climb, health officials predict that diabetes will become even more prevalent.

Before you begin a new exercise program, always check with your doctor, especially if you are on medications. Exercise has immediate effects on your blood sugar levels. Too much insulin and not enough food before exercise can result in dangerously low blood sugar; on the other hand, exercise may cause an increase in blood sugar, since exercise tells the body to put more sugar into the bloodstream to fuel the working muscles. You'll need to monitor your blood sugar at different times to be sure your medication is correct.

As far as what kind of exercise you should be doing, both cardiovascular and strength training are going to be beneficial. Start slowly, gradually increasing your exercise time to 30 minutes, and then up to an hour each day. Find activities that work into your existing lifestyle and that you enjoy, so you know you're more likely to continue consistently. I advise my diabetic fitness training clients to begin with walking every day, as well as doing easy strength training exercises like bicep curls and tricep dips twice a week. Even a small weight loss from around the middle can help improve your blood sugar regulation, and this can be done easily with increased physical activity and good eating habits.

Best of all, exercise keeps you strong and healthy, and makes you feel good. When you feel better, it's easier to follow your dietary and exercise recommendations to achieve maximum blood sugar control!

Cari Draft Elliott is an ACE-Certified Personal Trainer who makes "house calls"! Please check out her website at www.oneononefitgirl.com and email your questions to cari@oneononefitgirl.com.
