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Wise Notes for Consumers

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WALKING...THE BEST EXERCISE FOR DIABETES

Exercise is something most of us love to hate. But there is good news...walking is one of the safest and easiest ways to get the required amount of physical activity we need each week. Let's review the benefits of walking when someone has Type 2 diabetes.

Research shows sustained, regular exercise, like walking, reduces the risk of several life-threatening diseases, including heart disease, stroke, and probably certain cancers. For people with diabetes, it improves the way insulin works and gives you improved blood glucose readings!

It is important to take precautions by checking your blood glucose (sugar) before and after workouts. Foot care is important as well. Check your feet before and after workouts for blisters, breaks in the skin, redness or swelling.

To achieve these health benefits, you need to accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most, if not all days of the week. This goal can be accomplished with a single brisk 30-minute walk, several shorter walks that add up to 30 minutes, or with a short walk combined with other physical pursuits, such as yard work, or energetic housework.

The faster you swing your arms as you walk, the faster you'll be able to walk, since your arms

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and legs move in sync. To swing your arms faster, bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle rather than letting your arms hang down at your sides, and don't let your hands swing higher than chest level. When walking, push off with the balls of your feet, and take quicker strides, since extending your normal stride can cause low-back pain. Your body will automatically choose the right stride length that works best for you. Remember, keep your head up, shoulders back, and chest out to maintain a comfortable upright posture.

If you are concerned about pushing yourself too hard during the work-out, take notice of what your body is telling you. You're probably over-exercising if walking feels like drudgery; you have signs of low blood sugar, muscle cramps, leg pain, breathlessness or extreme fatigue. It's best to walk with someone else, just in case you need extra encouragement or a reminder to check your blood sugar while exercising.

If you would like to get started soon with a walking program, call the Wise County Extension office at 940/627-3341 and ask about Walk Across Texas. This is a free, fun, group physical activity program. All you need is a group of 8 friends, family members, or co-workers who want to keep track of the amount they walk for 8 weeks. You can encourage one another to keep going and see if your team can reach your destination first before other groups participating too. Walk Across Texas starts March 5 and continues through April 30.

Remember, before starting any exercise program, even walking – check with your doctor!

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