



exercising options

Myrna Partrich

Body awareness a gauge for diabetic exercisers

Dear Myrna: I am a diabetic who wants to exercise. Are there any late studies made on diabetes and exercise?

This is a serious medical question that I feel inappropriate answering. However, I feel comfortable giving you general information on this subject.

I am assuming you are under a doctor's care. Why not ask him or her?

Also, you haven't supplied me with any pertinent information. For example:

- Do you take insulin?
- How old are you?
- How long have you had diabetes?
- Have you exercised previously?
- Are you over or under weight?

Moderately intense exercise changes the way the body uses glucose and insulin and regulates blood sugar. It also increases your heart rate and blood pressure.

Exercise — the activity that improves health — can cause a person with insulin-dependent diabetes to experience severe hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and may increase other problems.

In a non-diabetic person, exercise suppresses insulin secretion and increases the liver secretion of glucose. The body, through a series of adjustments, maintains healthy blood sugar levels.

When a person takes insulin injections, the insulin appears to interfere with this natural process. Diabetes may cause changes in the intricate system of checks and balances that control blood sugar levels. As a result, low blood sugar reactions are a common by-product of in-

tense exercise in diabetics. The body is not able to balance the injected insulin with sufficient glucose from the liver.

Knowing some people with diabetes who exercise with me, I have concluded that diet and insulin dosages must be carefully monitored. You must get acquainted with how your body reacts to exercise.

This process is a slow one. Each person is unique; you must adjust to the demands of your own body. You will learn what to eat before you exercise and how to adjust insulin if you take it.

As you can see, I have assumed you take insulin daily. We must always go with the hardest scenario first.

If your diabetes is diet related, it will be easier to adjust exercise in your life. Each diabetic has to find a routine of aerobic exercise that they can enjoy and that doesn't threaten their ability to maintain reasonable blood sugar control.

All these issues — diet, insulin (if any) and degree of exercise should be discussed with a doctor.

Once you establish your program, please tune into body awareness. Body awareness will be your barometer.

(Myrna Partrich, co-owner of The Workout Company Inc. of Bloomfield Township and a member of the President's Council of Physical Fitness, is happy to answer any questions readers may have regarding exercise. Please send your letters to: Sports Department, Myrna Partrich, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, Mich., 48009.)

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