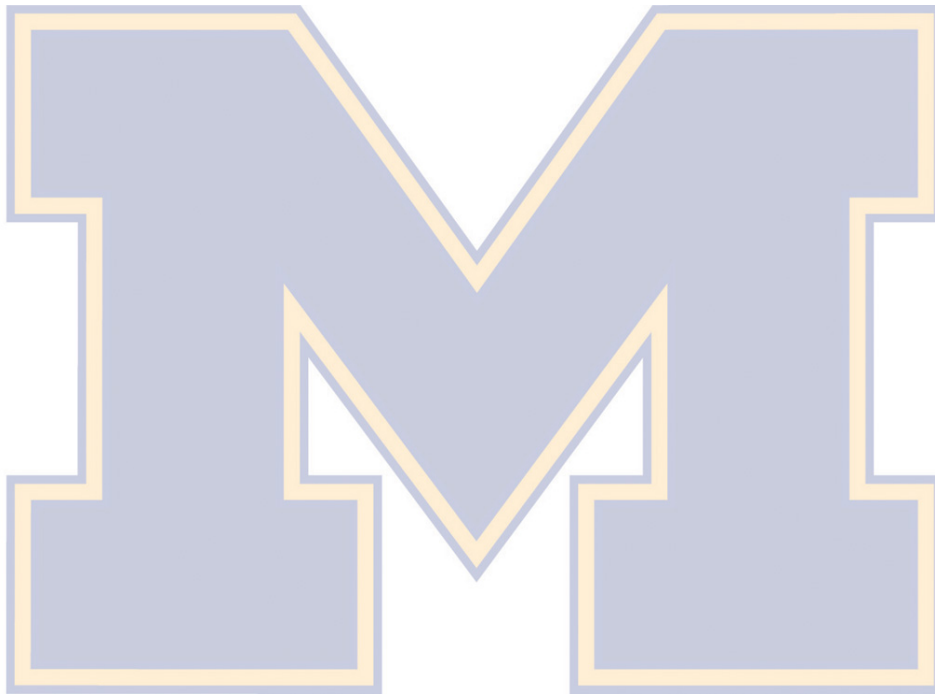


Newsletter #10



Exercise is Good for You and Good for Your Diabetes

Our bodies were meant to be active. There are so many benefits to exercise that if there was an “exercise pill”, everyone would want to take it! Exercise helps keep your heart, lungs, and muscles healthy, helps you think better, helps with weight management, and gives you more energy and a more positive outlook. For adults with diabetes, exercise has the added benefit of lowering blood sugar levels by helping the body to better use insulin and food. In short, you will look and feel better if you exercise.

It is often hard to change your behavior when the reward is a long way off. The beauty of exercise is that you will likely begin to feel the benefits almost right away. If you start a daily walk on Monday, you will probably be able to complete your walk more easily and feel less tired by Friday. You will likely notice that your blood sugar is lower. Another benefit of exercise is that you will feel better all day and may sleep better at night. Exercise is also a good way to relieve stress and reduce tension.

One way to become more active is to build exercise into your daily life. Ten minutes of vigorous exercise 3 times a day has the same benefit as 30 minutes of exercise once a day. There are lots of ideas about how to do this. For example, park further away or at the opposite end of the mall from where you are going so you can walk inside. Or, take a 10 minute walk after breakfast, lunch and dinner each day.

Another way to become more active is to begin an exercise program. An exercise program usually includes a warm-up, 20-30 minutes of vigorous exercise and ends with a cool-down period. If you begin an exercise

program after not being active for a while, you may feel sore at first. This should pass quickly—especially if you warm-up slowly and do some stretching exercises before and after your workout. The important part is to begin slowly and not push yourself. Doing too much too soon may cause injuries.

For people with diabetes, there are several things to think about before starting. If you are not currently active, talk to your health care provider before you begin. If your blood sugar is too low, you need to wait until it is closer to your target range before starting to exercise. If you take insulin, you may need to adjust your insulin and food to fit with your new level of physical activity. It is important to monitor more often at first to find out how exercise affects your blood sugar level. When you exercise, carry diabetes identification and if you take diabetes pills or insulin, carry glucose tablets with you in case your blood sugar goes too low. Protect your feet by choosing shoes that fit well and are made for the kind of exercise you do.

Although most people want to exercise and know that it is good for them, it is often hard to get started and to stick with it. Again, take it one step at a time. Start by thinking about what might get in the way of exercise and ways to overcome those barriers. Find something that you enjoy doing (or at least can stand to do). Ask a friend or family member to exercise with you. Think about what you did in the past that worked or did not work. Then, chose one thing to do this week to get started being more active.

Talk to your health care team about the type and amount of exercise that is right for you. If your provider says it is safe for you to exercise, you might think about joining a program or class. Along with gyms, your health or

community center may offer exercise programs. You will get expert help and meet new friends by joining a program with a trained leader. Being with others can also help you to exercise more faithfully.

Ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian the following questions:

1. What kind of exercise is safe for me?
2. Do I need to make any changes in my insulin dose or eat a snack before I exercise?
3. What is a safe level for my blood sugar before and after exercise?
4. Are there local exercise programs you recommend?