GUIDE THREE
OF FIVE

03

HOW DO I START EXERCISING?

EXTOD

EXTOD Exercise Confidence Guides

Where to start?

The best exercise is simply the one you'll enjoy enough to keep doing. Good places to start include:

- **Walking**
- **Easy cycling**
- **Swimming**
- **Dancing**
- **Gardening**
- **Walking the dog**

"What if I get it wrong?"

If you've been thinking about becoming more active but haven't quite taken the first step, don't worry. You are not alone.

Many people living with Type 1 diabetes worry about going low, or going too high. And they worry about not knowing what to do.

The good news is you don't need to know everything before you begin. You simply need to start safely.

That's what this guide is all about. But start small. One of the biggest mistakes people make is trying to do too much too soon. You don't need to train for a marathon, cycle across Britain, or spend hours in the gym. You just need to start exercising regularly. And remember: every T1D who now enjoys and benefits from regular exercise started exactly where you are today.

Glucose targets for exercise

Normally 7-10 mmol/L

Glucose targets for exercise are slightly higher than usual. This reflects usual responses to physical activity and helps reduce the risk of hypoglycaemia. Aim to start exercise with glucose in this range, and keep it there.

Starting

Every movement counts. But before you exercise ask yourself these four simple questions.

Is my blood glucose in a good range?

You don't need perfection. You just need a safe starting point. Learning what works for you takes time.

Checking early can stop problems later.

Do I have active insulin working?

Active insulin is one of the biggest reasons blood glucose can fall during exercise.

Knowing when you last took insulin is an important first step.

Do I have hypo treatment with me?

Always carry fast-acting carbohydrate.

For example:

- Glucose tablets
- Jelly Babies
- Fruit juice

It's much better to bring it back home than wish you'd packed it.

Can I check my blood glucose?

If you use a CGM, make sure it is working, has a full battery, and that you can read it clearly. If in doubt carry a blood glucose meter as a back up.

Exercise with confidence

It's often more enjoyable, and safer, to exercise with other people, especially when you're just getting started.

If you do, consider telling the people you are with that you have T1D. It only takes a minute, but it means they can help if you need support.

Living with Type 1 diabetes is nothing to be embarrassed about, and most people are simply pleased to know how they can help. If possible, make sure they know:

- where you keep your hypo treatment
- how to recognise the signs of a hypo
- who to contact if you become unwell.

Food is part of your exercise plan

During exercise, your body needs energy and the main fuels for this are carbs (carbohydrates) like potatoes and bread.

These carbs are stored in our bodies, but for longer or more intense exercise we need to top these up by eating fast-acting carbs like glucose tablets before or during exercise to avoid hypos.

Exactly what you need depends on your glucose level (and trend arrows on CGM), the intensity and duration of the exercise you are doing, and how much insulin is active.

You will learn more about this in Guide 4.

Habits that build confidence

After you finished exercising, take 2 minutes and ask yourself:

- **What did I do?**
- **What happened to my blood glucose?**
- **How did I feel?**
- **What might I try differently next time?**

These four questions will teach you more than trying to remember lots of rules.

Remember...

- **Not everyone gets it right first time. And it does take time. But the benefits are HUGE.**
- **Every person living with Type 1 diabetes is different.**
- **Don't aim for perfect blood glucose levels.**
- **Find an exercise that you enjoy.**
- **Regular exercise teaches you about your diabetes.**
- **Regular exercise will make you more confident.**

Your EXTOD Guides challenge 3

This week, try to do the activity you chose in ECG 2 on several days for around 20 minutes each time. But prepare for it using the four questions in this guide listed under "Starting". Don't worry about getting everything perfect. Simply notice what happens and write down one thing you learned.

Remember. Confidence about your diabetes comes from knowledge and information.

Your EXTOD Guides

- ☐ **01** Why should I exercise?
- ☐ **02** How exercise affects my blood glucose
- ☐ **03** How do I start exercising?
- ☐ **04** What is the ICE approach?
- ☐ **05** Make exercise work for you

Scan here to continue your journey

Visit the EXTOD website to explore more resources and continue learning.

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Top tips from T1s

"Always carry more hypo treatment than you think you'll need. I'd much rather bring some home than run out."

"Starting is always the hardest part. So start with something easy, like a walk around the block."

"Don't judge yourself by one bad exercise session. Look for patterns, and what did and didn't work for you."

"Write down what worked. You'll be amazed how quickly you build your own exercise playbook."

"Exercise should fit into your life. Not take it over. Find something you really enjoy, so you do it daily."

Your next step: Guide 4 – What Is the ICE Approach?

So you've started exercising. Now discover how three simple tools work together to help you exercise with confidence.

- Insulin
- Carbohydrate
- Exercise

Together they form the ICE approach.