

## Diabetes and Exercise

Jennifer Hamilton, DPT

Diabetes is a serious condition that affects over 20 million children and adults in the United States. Type II Diabetes is the most prevalent type of diabetes and is also termed “adult-onset” diabetes. Obesity, poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle are some common risk factors for Type II diabetes. This disease can have devastating effects if left untreated. Diabetes occurs when the body either doesn’t produce enough insulin, or the insulin that it has doesn’t work well to remove glucose (sugar) from the blood. As a result, the person will have abnormal blood glucose levels. Normal fasting blood glucose levels are between 70-110mg/dL. This level will change depending on what you eat and how much you exercise. Someone with fasting blood glucose levels less than 70mg/dL would be considered hypoglycemic (low) and someone with a fasting level over 126mg/dL would be considered hyperglycemic (high).

So how do you know if you have diabetes or should be checked for it? Some common signs or symptoms for diabetes include extreme thirst, frequent urination, and fatigue. If you have a family history of either Type I or Type II diabetes, you are at a greater risk for having diabetes. Another precursor for Type II diabetes for women is if you had gestational diabetes during pregnancy, and if your baby was nine pounds or heavier at delivery. If you have any risk factors you should be checked. Over 275,000 people in Maryland have diabetes, and nearly 1/3 of people with diabetes, don’t even know they have it!!!

If you have been told that you are pre-diabetic, you can make adjustments in your lifestyle to decrease your risk of developing diabetes. Studies have shown that by losing 5%-10% of your body weight and by starting a regular exercise program you can delay the onset of Type II Diabetes, or even prevent it all together. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that you exercise or participate in some form of physical activity for at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week.

If you already know you have diabetes, it isn’t too late to lose weight and exercise. They will also not only make you feel better, but help to keep you blood glucose levels under control. This recommendation was true for Yvonne “Starhawk” Jordan. She has been dealing with Type II Diabetes for over thirty years with much success on keeping it under control, but when she fell last year injuring her back, she was unable to exercise and her blood glucose level soon soared. After a year of suffering with back pain, she started physical therapy at Tidewater Physical Therapy in Pocomoke, MD. On the day of her first visit to PT, her blood glucose was measured at

260mg/dL. On the seventh day after starting PT, her levels had dropped to 198mg/dL. By the time she was discharged one month later her levels were normal again, averaging between 84-110mg/dL. Her back pain was decreasing which allowed her to resume her normal activity level. She stated "As I become more active because of the physical therapy, I see my ankles swelling less due to improved circulation, I am losing weight with little or no change in my diet, but most importantly my blood sugar is going down."

It is possible to live a long and healthy life if you have diabetes. However, you must be willing to take control and adjust your daily routine to incorporate diabetes "To Do" list. You must check your blood sugar everyday, as often as your doctor recommends. This will keep you informed on how well you are controlling your blood sugar. You must take good care of your feet, checking them for any cuts, red spots, swelling and blisters that could become infected and lead to various other ailments. Never go barefoot, even around the house. One of the leading causes of lower extremity amputation is from diabetes and poor foot hygiene. Lastly, remember to be compliant with a good exercise routine and healthy diet.

Jennifer Hamilton, DPT is Clinical Director of Tidewater Physical Therapy in Pocomoke, Maryland 101-C Market Street, Pocomoke City, Maryland. For more information please call 410-957-4050 or consult our website at [www.tidewaterpt.com](http://www.tidewaterpt.com).

Tidewater Physical Therapy has provided comprehensive physical therapy and rehabilitation services to patients on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Delaware for over 23 years and currently has 17 locally owned offices throughout the shore

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