

Walk Off Your Diabetes Risk

For older adults, a short 15-minute walk after every meal lowers blood sugar and the risk of Type 2 diabetes, a new study reveals. The post-meal walking was significantly better at lowering the post-dinner glucose level than 45-minute walks in the morning and evening times.

According to the research, brief walks can lower diabetes risk if they are taken soon after consuming a meal. Walking a half-hour after eating gives time for digestion first. Dr. Armand Krikorian, internal medicine program director at Advocate Christ Medical Center says, “Exercising after meal consumption causes the blood sugar to drop because more of the glucose goes to the muscles to help them with their metabolism. Additionally, the light walking helps the pancreas to do its duty, by clearing the glucose into the muscles.”

Briefer, more frequent exercise can also be more doable to older adults who are not used to exercising. This is important because to get the benefits, you have to do it every day. To make it easy, combine it with running errands or walking the dog. If walking outside is not a comfortable option, even exercising for 15 minutes in the house can work.

Faith communities can build this knowledge into their programs by creating brief opportunities for people to move around after community meals. Healthy habits are always more fun and easier to commit to if you’re doing it with other people!

Prayer: Thank you for creating our bodies that know what they need and regulate themselves. Help us to help our bodies be as strong and healthy as possible by delighting in all that they can do.

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Eat Well, Be Well

The percentage of Americans with diabetes has nearly doubled in the past two decades, according to a new study in the Annals of Internal Medicine. While genetics often plays a role in whether or not you have diabetes, lifestyle also makes a big difference, both in preventing diabetes and in managing it once you are diagnosed. Eating well is especially important.

Follow these simple, healthy eating tips:

- Do not skip meals. Eat at least three well-balanced meals each day.
- Eat at consistent times every day and space meals to no more than five hours to six hours apart.
- Avoid concentrated sweets: regular syrups, sugar, honey, jam, jelly, hard candy, cake, pie, cookies, chewing gum, soft drinks and fruit drinks.
- Include fiber-rich foods in a daily meal plan by choosing whole grain breads, cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables and dried beans.
- Use fresh fruits or canned fruits packed in water or natural juices. Avoid fruit canned in “heavy” or “lite” syrups. All juices should be 100 percent fruit juice, unsweetened or “no added sugar.”
- Remember that “sugar-free” labels on foods, such as cakes, cookies and candies, does not mean the foods can be eaten freely and are completely sugar-free. Check labels for grams of total carbohydrates.
- Bake, broil or roast meats. Avoid frying or breading meats. Avoid adding extra servings of butter, margarine or cream sauces to vegetables.

In our faith communities, we can recognize how diabetes impacts our members and be intentional about how we share meals together. Start a “Healthy Potluck” policy that asks people to bring dishes that follow the tips above. Don’t serve beverages that are loaded with sugar. Be aware of people for whom eating well may be difficult—isolated seniors, people with disabilities, those with limited resources—and talk with them about what they would find helpful. How we live together in community can literally change someone’s life!

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