



Delaine Wright Weighs In on Exercise

I'm one of the lucky people mentioned by Chad who generally likes to exercise (especially when I have my favorite tunes to help me keep the beat!). But in my twenty-seven-year career as a clinical exercise physiologist and certified diabetes educator who is living actively with type 1 herself, I have also worked closely with people who felt the exact opposite—so I understand and empathize completely. And I will also admit that I've experienced times in my life when I fell away from my exercise routine, lost the “like,” and had to fight a bit to return to and embrace it again. So I *do* appreciate Chad's approach of seeing exercise as a chore that we each just *have* to do—like brushing our teeth or mowing the lawn.

I also want to emphasize that it is important to “prep the way” by reducing as many individual barriers as possible. Part of that behavioral process involves knowing yourself and then making it as *easy* as possible for you to choose exercise over skipping a workout. For example, some of us do best when we exercise at a particular time of day, when it's easiest to avoid other things getting in the way—“getting it behind us” first thing in the morning, for example.

Exercising with a friend or partner is another “trick” that can help—misery loves company, as they say—and you'll feel a little guilty perhaps if you don't show up at your

neighbor's front door for that daily walk. Signing up for a paid class or a paid scheduled workout with a personal trainer is another method to keep you on track. Schedule it into your calendar and set that reminder alarm on your phone. Perhaps your music playlist is what motivates *you* to move your feet to a beat—nothing wrong with that at all. Place your sneakers and workout wear by the door so it's the first thing you see when you return to your house at the end of the day. Spend some thinking time figuring out what you need to do to “make it easy to happen” with exercise and then put it into practice.

Staying on top of blood sugar when you exercise is important. I always encourage people with diabetes to run a blood sugar experiment by testing (or tracking CGM data) before, during, and after exercise. Take good notes on what your exercise routine was like for the session. Be your own science project! It can be eye-opening. Not only will keeping track help you balance your blood sugar levels around exercise, but it's also *so* empowering to see the difference that even thirty minutes of exercise can make on your levels! It's so powerful a benefit that you're often that much more motivated to do it again the next day.

And if you're someone who struggles a bit with the hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) associated with exercise, you'll learn what your body needs to avoid a low. As an active person with type 1 diabetes, I know how frustrating it can be to have to shove food in your mouth so that you can exercise. Once I understood my own glycemic response to exercise, I worked with my health care team, endocrinologist, and diabetes educator to adjust my basal insulin flow

to avoid *having* to eat to exercise. And as a diabetes health care professional, I've helped many others do the same.

Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work with many high-level endurance athletes who excelled at their sport despite, and I would also say *because of*, diabetes. A triathlete with type 1 diabetes who has the eventual goal of completing the Ironman Triathlon (which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a marathon 26.22-mile run, raced consecutively in that order) must learn their individual blood sugar response to various training workouts. The adjustments that need to be made to manage blood sugars around exercise differ significantly when completing a training run versus a swim. And as the workloads, duration, and distance increase over weeks and months, so too do the required adjustments to both insulin levels and fuel intake. An athlete with diabetes develops this incredible understanding and puts it into practice during every workout.

As Chad has pointed out, even for those not training for endurance events, different types of exercise activities and varying intensities can drastically affect the glycemic response. That's where patterning and being a good observer, notetaker, and researcher will help you understand what is going on in your particular situation—and allow you to make adaptations that work for you.

Also, remember that it's not just formal exercise that demonstrates an impressive blood glucose response. Even simple activities around the house that involve movement (such as doing housework or working in the yard) can also significantly lower blood sugar. And this positive benefit can last for hours. Do this tracking experiment by

testing and patterning your blood sugars around everyday activities—this *will* help motivate you to move more! We have a lot of positive power in our own two hands and our own two feet. Every little bit helps, in more ways than one.

And last, I would say that even though you might not be someone who finds exercise fun right now, I promise that you *can* find some fun in exercise! Occasionally, make it an adventure to do something different. Plan a walk (or a more strenuous hike) somewhere that you haven't necessarily been before. Embrace nature and the outdoors. Learn a new skill, try something different, challenge yourself, create some memories, have some laughs, or enjoy your family, grandkids, and friends in an adventuresome new way.

Allow a life with diabetes to activate and empower you to live your life *fully*—and you'll have a positive, motivating, and inspirational effect on so many others around you as well!

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Delaine Wright is a master's-level clinical exercise physiologist who has spent a rewarding twenty-seven-year career in health care working as a certified diabetes educator and team lead of a hospital-based cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation and wellness program in southern Rhode Island. She lives actively with type 1 diabetes herself, having been diagnosed at age fifteen in 1983.

Delaine was an early member of the famous Children with Diabetes (CWD) DTeam, answering questions in

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an online support system. She has appeared on episodes of the *DLife* television series, sharing her story of participation in aerial arts while managing blood sugars in the air. She was a founding member of the Fit4D (now Cecelia Health) team of diabetes professionals that provides personal coaching for those living with diabetes. In this role, she has coached a wide variety of athletes with diabetes—including marathoners, cyclists, swimmers, tri-athletes, and even other aerialists.

Delaine has lectured nationally to PWDs and health care professionals on diabetes management and exercise, as well as cardiovascular disease prevention and wellness. She has written articles and shared her expertise in books and publications over the years. She is honored to add a voice to Chad's publication.