

Physical Activity and Medications

This handout lists common medications to consider when becoming physically active.



BETA-BLOCKERS (for example, *propranolol, atenolol, metoprolol, sotalol, carvedilol*) may limit the heart's ability to beat faster in response to exercise. This may result in difficulty catching your breath, tiredness, and sore muscles. Even though your heart rate does not increase, you will get all the benefits of exercise.

Solutions:

- Increase your warm-up and cool-down time
- Ask your health care team if you can take a different drug or a smaller amount

STEROIDS (for example, *prednisone, dexamethasone, hydrocortisone, methylprednisolone, fludrocortisone*) may cause:

- Loss of muscle mass leading to weakness and poor endurance
- Mood swings, which could affect your motivation to be active

Solutions:

- Start slowly and gradually increase physical activity
- Think positively. Call on friends and family to help keep you motivated.
- Ask your health care team if you can take a different drug or a smaller amount

THYROID REPLACEMENT MEDICATION (*levothyroxine*) may limit your ability to exercise if you take too much or too little medicine.

Solution:

- Ask your health care provider to check your thyroid level to make sure you are taking the right amount

DIABETES MEDICATIONS (*for example, insulin, glyburide, glipizide, metformin, pioglitazone*) Exercise naturally causes your blood sugar to go down. In some cases, exercise combined with your regular diabetes medications could result in low blood sugars. Symptoms of low blood sugar include feeling shaky, lightheaded, weak, confused, or extremely hungry.

Solutions:

- Monitor your blood sugar with your glucose meter before, during, and after a new exercise routine until you become familiar with how the exercise affects your blood sugar. Your health care team can give you upper and lower limits.
- Don't exercise on an empty stomach or when you are dehydrated. Think ahead and have glucose tablets or hard candy with sugar or a beverage containing sugar with you while exercising. Avoid exercising too close to bedtime.
- Ask your health care team for help adjusting your diabetes medications if you experience low blood sugar before, during, or after exercise.

As you improve fitness and lose weight, let your health care team know. You may be able to decrease your dosages or discontinue some medications. Always consult with your health care team before making any changes.