

How to Start

You can get audio or video tapes that give breathing instruction and teach relaxation techniques at health food stores, bookstores, and by mail order. It's probably fine to learn breath and relaxation from a tape or booklet, but don't try the yoga exercises without a skilled teacher. He or she can make corrections, caution you when necessary, and help you to adapt poses, if you need to.

It will be worth it to you to spend a little time finding an instructor who is right for you. Your diabetes nurse educator or other health care professional may be able to recommend a yoga instructor. Get referrals for a yoga instructor as you would for any professional you might wish to consult.

Yoga instructors aren't required to be certified, but many are, through many different programs. Ask prospective teachers if they are certified. A certified teacher isn't necessarily better than someone who isn't certified, but it's something to consider.

Yoga is fun, healthy, and calming. It's a wise way handed down over several thousands of years. There is little danger in yoga, and even a little progress brings with it freedom and peace of mind.

Although most people with diabetes can exercise safely, exercise involves some risks. To shift the benefit-to-risk ratio in your favor, take these precautions:

Have a medical exam before you begin your exercise program, including an exercise test with EKG monitoring, especially if you have cardiovascular disease, you are over 35, you have high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol levels, you smoke, or you have a family history of heart disease.

Discuss with your doctor any unusual symptoms that you experience during or after exercise such as discomfort in your chest, neck, jaw, or arms; nausea, dizziness, fainting, or excessive shortness of breath; or short-term changes in vision.

If you have diabetes-related complications, check with your healthcare team about special precautions. Consider exercising in a medically supervised program, at least initially, if you have peripheral vascular disease, retinopathy, autonomic neuropathy, or kidney problems.

Learn how to prevent and treat low blood glucose levels (hypoglycemia). If you take oral agents or insulin, monitor your blood glucose levels before, during,

and after exercise.

If you have type I, and your blood glucose is above 250 milligrams per deciliter, check your urine for ketones. Don't exercise if ketones are present, because exercise will increase your risk of ketoacidosis and coma.

Always warm up and cool down.

Don't exercise outdoors when the weather is too hot and humid, or too cold.