

YOUR GUIDE TO COMPLETING A WELLNESS WALK



DIABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

CONTENTS

- 3** Welcome to your Wellness Walk
- 5** How to get started
- 6** Planning your practice walks
- 7** How to stay motivated
- 8** Looking after your feet
- 10** Nutrition and walking
- 13** Blood sugar levels if you have diabetes
- 15** Progress tracker

WELCOME TO YOUR WELLNESS WALK

**Okay, so you've signed up to
take part in a Wellness Walk.
But now what?**

Over the next few pages, you'll find all sorts of tips, tricks and information about how you can build up your walking levels, eat well and take care of yourself, to help you complete your Wellness Walk with confidence, joy and pride.

All movement and walking can be beneficial but as you have a specific date and distance to aim for with your Wellness Walk in the diary, it's important to increase time on your feet steadily. We don't want you to build up too quickly as you might develop an injury, or risk your health along the way.



Consistency will be important, so we've included an easy 'track your progress' sheet at the end of this guide to help see the progress you've made. If you carry your mobile phone on your walks, you can easily count your steps, time your walk and measure the distance.

**MAKE EVERY
MILE COUNT!**

If you have diabetes, it's important to speak to your diabetes healthcare team. They can give you individual advice about managing your diabetes during exercise, like whether you need to adjust any medications and how often to check your blood glucose levels. Go to your appointment armed with your questions to get the most out of the time.

If you're in need of anything at all, please contact the Diabetes UK Wellness Walk team at wellnesswalk@diabetes.org.uk or ask our Facebook community.

A huge thank you for signing up to a Wellness Walk, we know you're going to absolutely smash it and love every minute.



HOW TO GET STARTED



If you've signed up to a Wellness Walk in advance, hopefully you'll have at least a few weeks to get in some training walks before the big day, so you can complete the event with confidence and finish feeling great.

- A brisk three-mile walk takes about an hour to complete. This is faster than a stroll, but you should be able to continue having a conversation with someone, if walking with other people.
- When you feel ready, time how long it takes to complete one mile and see if you are reaching that pace, or need to build up to it over several weeks.
- If you're not used to walking a lot, start each walk slowly. Aim for three walks in the first week – building up by five minutes at a time.
- Do a bit more each week – increasing the length and the pace of your walks. You could also add in additional walks if you have the time and capacity.
- Wellness Walks are between five and ten miles long so, if possible, try to work your way up to at least one hour before the event.
- Take time to rest and recover between your training walks and if you ever feel pain, stop, rest and seek advice from a professional, such as your diabetes specialist or a physio.

PLANNING YOUR PRACTICE WALKS

Before you head outside plan your route to reduce the chances of getting lost along the way. There are lots of options available to help you do this, for example Google Maps, OS maps or Strava.

Be aware of your personal safety when out walking, especially in the dark. Make sure that you always carry your charged phone, that someone knows where you're going and when to expect you back.

Of course, comfy shoes, boots or trainers, socks, weather appropriate clothing and sunscreen need to be considered if you are heading outside for a length of time.

Finally, take a bottle of water, medication and hypo treatment if needed.

After your walk, be sure to tick off your progress sheet (or download your route) and feel proud of your achievement. If you start to feel a bit stiff or achy after your walk, do a few stretches to loosen the muscles.



HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED

Make it a habit and include walking into your daily routine:

- Walk part of your journey to work, school or to the shops.
- If the distance to travel is less than a mile – always aim to walk it instead of using the car or bus.

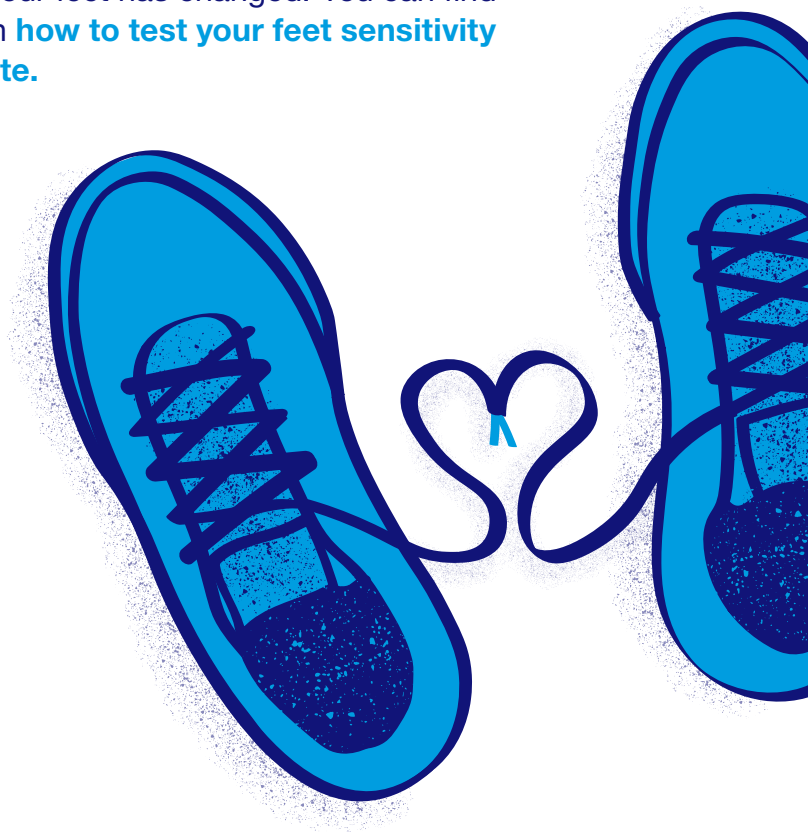
Change it up:

- Walk with friends or family – use your training as a reason to catch up with people.
- Drive to a route you don't do as often, or in a new area.
- Walk your normal route in reverse.
- Try a treadmill walk – especially if the weather is wet, cold or dark outside. The treadmill is great at changing the gradient or speed of your walk.
- Ask to walk a neighbour's dog.
- Listen to podcasts, audio books or music while walking.
- Walk using your heart rate as a guide. If you have a smart watch or chest strap you could use your heart rate as a guide to show how hard you are working out.
- Don't just walk – if you can, get out on your bike, go for a swim or join an exercise class to help improve general fitness.
- Share your progress on our Wellness Walk Facebook group.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FEET

We want you to enjoy our walks and be healthy, but we know that it is especially important to look after your feet if you have diabetes.

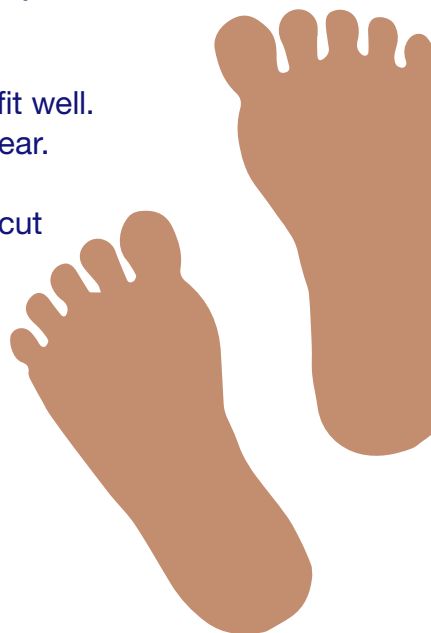
Before you start your training for the walk, we recommend that you test the sensitivity in your feet and discuss with your healthcare professional if you have any concerns, or the sensitivity in your feet has changed. You can find information on [how to test your feet sensitivity on our website.](#)



Here are 5 tips to help look after your feet, so that your walk can be as safe and enjoyable as possible:

- 1** Check your feet daily for any changes, including cuts and blisters, colour changes, swelling, pain, bruises or build-up of hard skin. If you have any concerns, especially if something is not healing well, get your feet checked out with your diabetes healthcare team urgently.
- 2** Wash and dry every day, especially between the toes. Avoid soaking your feet as this just makes the skin more likely to get damaged.
- 3** Use moisturising cream every day, but don't put cream or talcum powder between your toes, as this can cause problems.
- 4** Make sure your footwear and socks fit well. Check for any damage to your footwear.
- 5** Keep toenails trimmed. Take care to cut your nails carefully.

We have more information on **how to look after your feet, on our website**



NUTRITION AND WALKING

EATING WELL



Making healthy food choices can help to maintain your energy levels during training for your wellness walk and can help you manage your weight.

Different foods provide essential nutrients needed for good health, so it's important to include a diverse range of foods in your diet from the main food groups.

Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, beans and pulses, and unsweetened dairy. Choose healthier fats – unsaturated - such as those found in olive oil, avocados, and nuts. Try to eat less red and processed meat, salt, refined carbohydrates like white rice and white bread, and sugar sweetened foods and drinks.

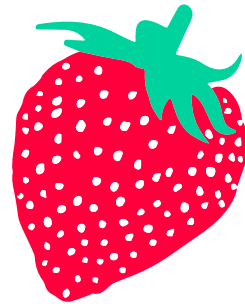
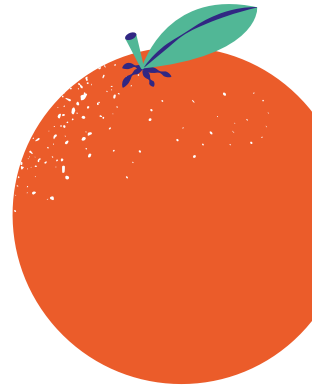
We have more tips for [healthy eating with diabetes on our website](#), and different meal plans to help you.

Everyone with diabetes should have advice about their diet from a dietitian and weight monitoring. So ask your doctor or nurse for a referral if you need some help.

DO I NEED SNACKS FOR TRAINING AND LONGER WALKS?

The amount and type of food you will need when walking depends on when you last ate, how hungry you are and your blood sugar levels. Not everyone will need to have a snack before they start moving more, and what you eat depends on the distance and pace of your walk. If you're walking for over an hour at a brisk to fast pace, think about having a snack during your walk. **Check your blood glucose levels before, during and after your walk and be sure to carry hypo treatments with you in addition to any snacks.**

There is no need to consume sports nutrition products such as energy bars or gels for low-intensity exercises such as walking, instead it is helpful to choose snacks based on whole foods if you wish to eat something. A slice of malt loaf, an unsweetened yoghurt or a piece of fruit, such as banana, are good examples of pre- and post-walk snacks.



Try making your own trail mix using unsweetened dried fruit, nuts and seeds to take with you on your walk.

WHAT ABOUT HYDRATION?

Stay well hydrated. This might include before, during, or after a walk. Plain water is the best choice for hydration during exercise, although you can also consider having drinks containing electrolytes to help prevent dehydration on longer walks or in hotter weather. Some of these drinks contain carbs so think about the effect on blood sugar.

Aim for six to eight glasses of sugar-free fluid daily, increasing this amount when exercising. Thirst is a good indication of when to drink during a walk. Try little and often and don't introduce any new types of fluids on the main walk day as you won't know the effect on your stomach or blood sugar levels.

Post-walk rehydration is important to replace any lost fluids. The amount you need varies from person to person. If you are dehydrated, try to have some salt with your post-walk meal to help you rehydrate. Milk can also be a good rehydration fluid.



BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS IF YOU HAVE DIABETES

Walking can affect blood sugar levels in different ways and can vary significantly between individuals. The longer and more strenuous the walk, the more likely your blood sugar levels would be expected to lower.

If you use equipment to test your blood sugars, make sure that you have this available on the day of the walk. If you don't have the equipment to test your blood sugars, it is recommended you have a small carbohydrate snack with you.

Some people may need a small carbohydrate snack during activity. This is particularly useful for anyone taking insulin or medication that can lower blood sugar levels. Also, having fast-acting carbohydrates such as sugary drinks and glucose tablets on you is recommended to help prevent or treat a hypo.

For others, a small snack can help if you feel dizzy, are new to exercise, new to long walks, or have symptoms of low blood sugars.

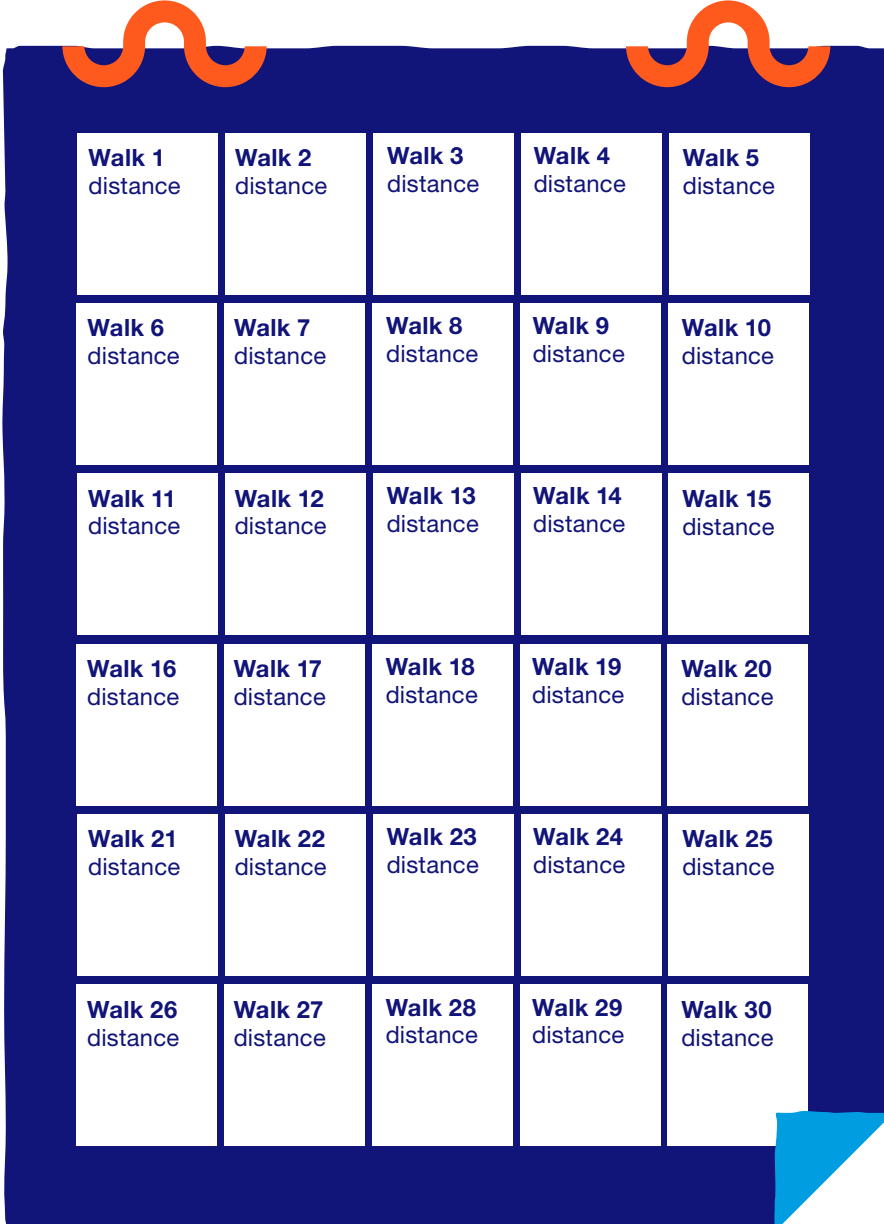


REMEMBER

- **Before starting your walk**, your blood sugars should ideally be between around **5.6 -12mmol/l**.
- **Do not exercise** if your blood sugar levels are **4mmol/L or lower**.
- If you have a hybrid closed loop insulin pump, consider using the **activity or temporary target setting** for around 90 minutes before and during your walk.
- If you've had a **severe hypo**, you should **avoid all exercise for at least 24 hours after**.

We have more information on [exercise and blood sugar levels, on our website](#).

TRAINING PROGRESS



Walk 1 distance	Walk 2 distance	Walk 3 distance	Walk 4 distance	Walk 5 distance
Walk 6 distance	Walk 7 distance	Walk 8 distance	Walk 9 distance	Walk 10 distance
Walk 11 distance	Walk 12 distance	Walk 13 distance	Walk 14 distance	Walk 15 distance
Walk 16 distance	Walk 17 distance	Walk 18 distance	Walk 19 distance	Walk 20 distance
Walk 21 distance	Walk 22 distance	Walk 23 distance	Walk 24 distance	Walk 25 distance
Walk 26 distance	Walk 27 distance	Walk 28 distance	Walk 29 distance	Walk 30 distance



diabetes.org.uk
events.fundraising@diabetes.org.uk
0345 123 2399

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