

## Exercise ... getting started

It's often said that the longest journey starts with a single step. The same is true of exercise.

There's always an excuse for not exercising ... too tired, bad weather, too busy, too sick, hectic lifestyle. Unfortunately having an excuse is indicative of much more deep seated resistance to exercising. How to overcome that resistance is a topic in itself but for now let's consider how to weigh up the benefits of exercising as opposed to not doing so. This is the first step in a long journey to better health. A journey that will make you feel stronger, assist you in managing your diabetes more effectively and change your whole outlook on life.

That probably sounds far fetched but the truth is that the benefits gained from exercising in a methodical and correct manner far outweigh the outcomes from not achieving good levels of fitness.

Our modern lives generally do not tax us physically. For many of us the daily routine is to get out of bed, walk a few steps between bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and the car, drive to work, walk a short distance to our workplace then sit until it's time to go home, to repeat the same pattern over and over again. In short bursts this kind of sedentary routine is possibly not harmful but over longer periods the effects on our bodies and metabolism can be critical.

It's really important for people living with diabetes to consider the beneficial effects that routine exercise will have on the management of their disease.

Regular exercise:

- increases your metabolic rate resulting in much more effective uptake of insulin;
- when combined with a low fat diet will result in effective weight control;
- increases your sense of wellbeing through natural physiological processes;
- provides greater core strength and balance control resulting in less risk of falling, which is especially critical for older people;

can provide much needed social contact through walking clubs etc.

Before you start any form of exercise it's crucial that you talk to your diabetes health professional team about what sort of exercise you should attempt, what goals you want to achieve and what you should be aware of before you start.

Managing your BGL (blood glucose levels) during exercise is very important. You must not overdo things but rather start off exercising slowly, building up your levels of fitness gradually and methodically.

### To begin

Use the following visual guide as a starting point in your stretching régime. Although these look simple, take your time and follow the instructions carefully. If you are uncertain about doing these on your own either ask a friend or family member to assist you or find a gym nearby that can run through the routines with you.

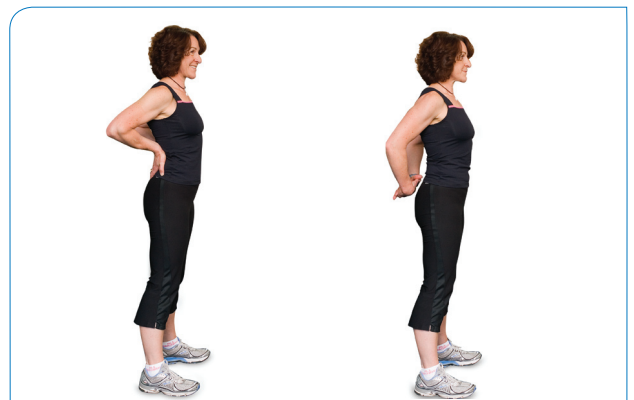
The stretches can either be used **after** your normal exercise routine or as an exercise routine in themselves. Do not stretch before exercising.

Dtour Magazine recommends that you consult your GP or professional health team before you commence any physical activity that you are not accustomed to. We advise that you discuss your needs with a qualified physiotherapist, personal fitness trainer or sports physiologist if you are hesitant about undertaking these exercises on your own. **D**

*DTour Magazine wishes to thank Manu Iseppi, Personal Fitness Trainer in Hobart, for her contribution to this article.*



**Quad Stretch:** from a relaxed standing position lift one leg so that the foot is raised behind you. Support your foot by holding the instep. Your standing leg should be relaxed - not "locked". Hold for 10 - 15 seconds then repeat for the other leg. Use a wall or chair for balance if required. Do not repeat.



**Chest Stretch:** Stand with your feet hip width apart and parallel. Stay tall in your posture and place your hands in the small of your back or with your hands clasped behind you, whichever is most comfortable for you. Draw your shoulder blades back until the stretch is felt in your chest. Hold for 15-30 seconds, do not repeat.

## How do I know if I'm doing the exercises properly?

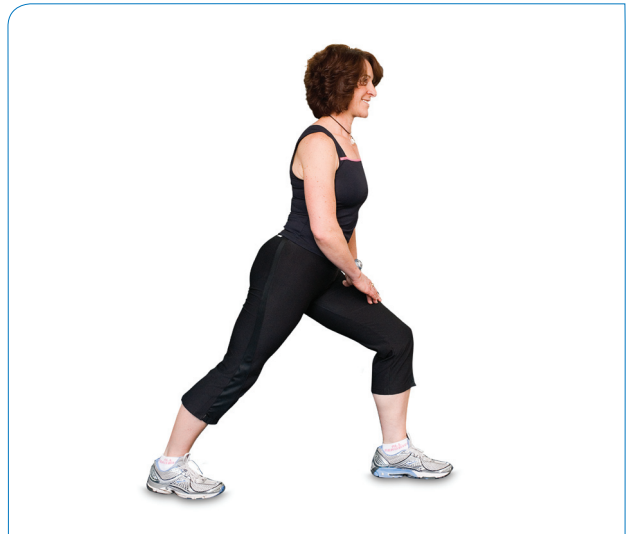
Many people who are just commencing physical exercise ask whether they are actually performing their exercises correctly. To achieve the maximum benefit from any form of physical activity it's important to follow the directions given for each exercise.

### Take into account the following points:

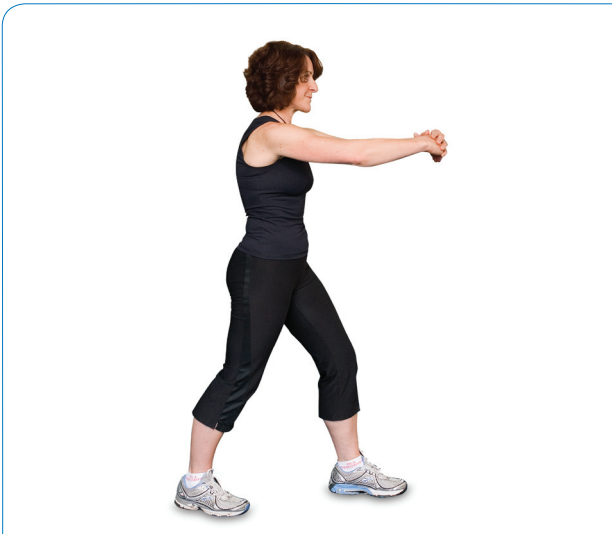
1. Try and relax into the stretch and breathe slowly and evenly.
2. An appropriate intensity is where the stretch is felt but is not painful.
3. You should feel tension subside as the stretch is held.
4. Never overstretch muscles and tendons beyond a point of active control.
5. Perform the program 3 - 5 times per week.
6. You should feel a slight discomfort.
7. Perform each stretch for 15 - 30 seconds for maintenance, 30 - 60 seconds for improvement.



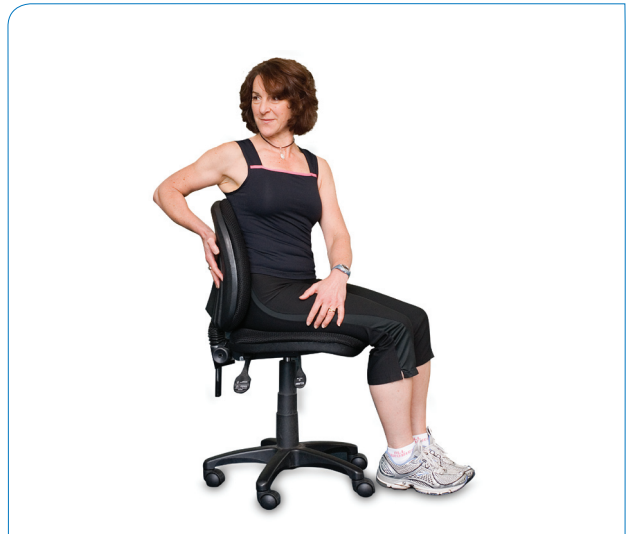
**Hamstring:** standing one arm length in front of a chair raise one leg onto the back of the chair. Bend forward from waist keeping back nice and straight. You can rest your hands on your legs during the stretch but do not push down onto your leg. Hold for 10-15 seconds then repeat for the other leg. Do not repeat.



**Calf Stretch:** stand with your legs in a split stance. Keep your heels on the floor with relaxed knees. Push back onto rear most leg until you can feel the stretch in your calf. Repeat for the other leg. Do not repeat.



**Back Stretch:** Stand with your feet hip width apart with relaxed knees. Clasp your hands gently in front of you at chest height. Keep your shoulders down. Push your hands forward and allow your shoulder blades to move apart. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Do not repeat.



**Chair Stretch:** Sit upright and comfortably on a chair with both feet flat on the floor, legs in front of you with knees together. Twist your torso from the waist gently and hold. You can enhance the stretch by putting a hand on the back of the chair. Hold for 15-30 seconds then repeat for other side. Do not repeat.