



# WALK KANSAS

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

[www.WalkKansas.org](http://www.WalkKansas.org)

**2023 WEEK FOUR**



## Exercise and Your Blood Sugar

What is blood sugar and why is it important? Blood sugar (glucose) refers to the amount of simple sugar moving through your body at any given time. Your body breaks down most of the food you eat into glucose and releases it into your bloodstream for fuel. When your blood sugar goes up, your pancreas releases the hormone insulin. Think of insulin as a key to let the blood sugar into the cells of your body for energy.

Some people have, or may develop, a chronic and long-lasting health condition called diabetes that affects how their body turns food into fuel. If you have diabetes, your body doesn't make enough insulin, or can't use it as well as it should, and too much blood sugar stays in your bloodstream. Over time, serious health problems can develop such as heart disease, vision loss, and kidney disease.

You have probably heard of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Those who have type 1 diabetes need to take insulin every day to survive. Usually diagnosed in children, teens, and young adults, symptoms of type 1 diabetes often develop quickly, and no one knows how to prevent it.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common and is usually diagnosed in adults, although now more and more in children, teens, and young adults. If you have type 2 diabetes, your body doesn't use insulin well and can't keep blood sugar at normal levels. The key message about type 2 diabetes, is that it can be delayed, or even prevented, with a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and physical activity.

The benefits of physical activity can't be overstated for people who have diabetes or are at risk for developing diabetes and other chronic diseases. Exercise can help you lose weight and maintain a healthy weight. Added benefits for those with diabetes is that exercise lowers blood sugar levels and boosts your sensitivity to insulin, which helps keep blood sugar within a normal range.

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Here are specific recommendations for those with, and at risk for, diabetes:

**Aerobic exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes (more is better) of moderate/vigorous exercise – like brisk walking, swimming, biking, or running – on most days for a minimum of 150 minutes/week.

**Include resistance exercises** to increase strength, balance, and the ability to maintain an active life. These include lifting weights, yoga, using resistance bands, and bodyweight exercises.

**Limit inactivity.** Breaking up bouts of inactivity can help control blood sugar levels. Make sure you stand, walk, or do some light activity every 30 minutes during the day. Use an app or alarm to nudge you to move regularly, stand or move during commercials when watching TV, and take frequent stretch breaks when driving long distances or traveling.

In addition, about 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. have prediabetes, meaning their blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Prediabetes is real, it is common, and most importantly, it is reversible with simple, proven lifestyle changes. Most people don't know they have it. Could this be you? Learn more about diabetes at [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/index.html).



## Dining with Diabetes

Register before April 26 to participate in an online Dining with Diabetes program. This course is self-led and helps individuals learn strategies to manage their diabetes through menu planning, carbohydrate counting, portion control, and label reading. Program modules will be available to participants each week, from May 1 – 22, with a follow-up session in July. The course is \$25.

Please visit [ksre-learn.com/dining-with-diabetes-may2022](http://ksre-learn.com/dining-with-diabetes-may2022) for additional information and to get registered.



## Vegetarian Eating Style

Vegetarian eating styles continue to increase in popularity for a variety of reasons, including health benefits, as this style may reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

Vegetarian styles vary in what foods they include or exclude.

- » Lacto-vegetarian: Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, butter) are included. Exclude meat, fish, poultry, and eggs.
- » Ovo-vegetarian: Include eggs. Exclude meat, poultry, seafood, and dairy products.
- » Lacto-ovo vegetarian: Allow dairy products and eggs. Exclude meat, fish, and poultry.
- » Pescatarian: Include fish. Exclude meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs.
- » Vegan: Exclude meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products, as well as foods that contain these products.

Another term you might hear is flexitarian. While someone might follow a diet that is mostly plant-based, they still eat meat, dairy, eggs, poultry, and fish occasionally or in small amounts.

As you plan to follow one of these eating patterns, keep in mind that the more foods you cut out, the harder it could be to get all of the nutrients you need. Plan around a variety of healthy plant-based foods, including whole fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes (lentils, beans, and peanuts). Cut back on less healthy choices, like sugar-sweetened beverages, fruit juices, and refined grains.

Nutrients to pay close attention to as you plan with a vegetarian eating style, are calcium and vitamin D, vitamin B-12, protein, Omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc, and iodine. It is worth the effort to work with a registered dietitian who can help you create a vegetarian plan that is right for you.

If you choose to transition to a vegetarian eating style, start slowly by reducing the amount of meat in your diet while increasing fruits and vegetables. Prepare favorite recipes and try them without meat. Substitute black beans for ground beef in chili, make fajitas using extra-firm tofu instead of chicken. You might be surprised that many dishes you enjoy now can be adapted with simple changes.

## Vary Your Activity

If you haven't done so already, it is time to vary your activity routine! Two things that commonly happen when things get "too" routine, your mind and your body get bored.

If you are doing the same activity, day after day, you may start to dread something you once loved. When you don't enjoy what you are doing, you are less likely to make time in your day to do it. In addition, doing the same thing each day, at the same intensity, may stop challenging your body the way it used to do.

It is easy to get into a rut with exercise. If you really enjoy walking, explore new trails and places to walk. Challenge yourself with terrain that includes hills so you work different muscles. Vary the focus of your walk or workout, paying attention to speed one day and technique or duration on others. Find a buddy to walk with. You'll have more fun and will look forward to your workout when you know someone is counting on you.

## Mexican Lentil Soup

Makes 3 Servings

(This recipe is easy to double for more servings!)

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped yellow onion
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped yellow bell pepper
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup peeled and diced carrots
- $\frac{1}{2}$  jalapeno, seeds discarded, chopped (optional)
- 2 teaspoons (2 cloves) minced garlic
- $3\frac{1}{2}$  cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can fire roasted tomatoes
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown lentils, rinsed and picked over
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped cilantro
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice

### For serving:

- 1 avocado, sliced
- 3 tablespoons crumbled cotija or feta cheese

**Nutrition Information per 1 cup serving:** 460 calories; 17 g total fat (3.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat); 59 g carbohydrates; 17 g protein; 29 g fiber; 660 mg sodium; 12 g sugar.

### Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Prepare produce and rinse under cold running water.
3. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper, carrots, and jalapeno (optional) and sauté about 2 minutes.
4. Add minced garlic and sauté about 2 minutes longer. Stir in broth, tomatoes, lentils, chili powder, cumin, and coriander.
5. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until lentils are tender, about 40 minutes. Stir several times throughout cooking.
6. Stir in cilantro and lime juice. Serve warm, topping each serving with avocados and cheese.



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