



Beat the heat and stay healthy this summer

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If you have diabetes, it's important for your health to take certain precautions in the hot weather. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun this summer, whether you're traveling or making the most of a relaxing staycation. Below are a few simple steps to have a safe and fun summer.

Watch out for the heat and humidity

If you have diabetes, you'll need to **be careful spending too much time outdoors**, especially when the temperature reaches 80F in the shade with 40% humidity or above. (This means the heat index—a measure of how hot it really feels when you factor in the humidity—can be up to 15 degrees higher than the stated temperature in full sunlight.)

Some diabetes complications, such as neuropathy, can affect your ability to sweat, which means that your body may be unable to cool itself effectively, possibly leading to heat stroke. Conversely, **people with diabetes may be prone to excessive sweating in hot weather**, which can cause dehydration and higher blood sugar levels.

Avoid too much sun exposure. Not only will it make you feel the heat more, but sun damage to your skin can actually raise blood sugar levels.

While physical activity is important for people with diabetes, **don't attempt it in the heat of midday.** The best times to walk, run or bike are early in the morning or in the evening. Some days may be too warm even at those

times, in which case you should try an air-conditioned gym or even the local shopping mall for a bit of walking.

Let your blood sugar be your guide

Summer can be a great time to let go of your daily routine. However, if you follow a different schedule while you're on vacation or visiting friends—or when friends are visiting you—be sure to check your blood sugar more frequently, as much as four times a day. Other precautions to consider include:



Drink lots of fluids, even if you don't feel particularly thirsty. However, it's important to avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can worsen dehydration. Your best choices are water, drinks with electrolytes or seltzer.



Don't go barefoot, even on the beach or around the pool. Walking barefoot can be dangerous for people with diabetes who also suffer from peripheral neuropathy, which can cause a loss of sensation in your feet.



Wear light, loose-fitting clothing, a hat that can protect you against the sun and broad-spectrum sunscreen. Also, don't forget the sunglasses—people with diabetes are at a greater risk for developing cataracts, so make sure you wear shades with 100 percent UV protection.



Keep fast-acting glucose snacks (preferably hard candy or glucose tablets) nearby in a cool place, just in case you're affected by hypoglycemia.



Keep your insulin cool. Remember that high temperatures cause insulin to degrade. If you're storing insulin in a cooler, avoid putting it into direct contact with ice or a gel pack. Better yet, consider one of the many specialized insulin coolers available online at reasonable prices.

Traveling with Diabetes

People with diabetes can—and do—travel anywhere in the world. Planning ahead can take the worry out of your trip and help you manage when you face unfamiliar foods and time zones. It can also increase your enjoyment of the sights you'll see and the fun you'll have with family and friends.

Before you go, see your doctor for a check-up to ensure that you're in good shape to make your planned trip. Also, have your doctor provide prescriptions for you for any insulin or other medication you may need, just in case you lose the medication you bring with you.

If you don't have one already, get a Medical ID bracelet or necklace, which states that you have diabetes (as well as any other health conditions).

Make a list well ahead of your trip of the medication and diabetes supplies you'll need, including syringes, your insulin pump, test strips, glucose meters and other equipment. A rule of thumb is to pack at least twice as much medication and testing supplies as you may need. Put half of these supplies in your carry-on and keep them with you at all times.

If you travel with a continuous glucose monitor and/or insulin pump attached to your body, tell the officers at the TSA checkpoint where on your body it is located before you pass through the screener. If you don't wish to go through a standard screening, you have the right to request a pat-down by one of the officers. (For more on this, go to <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2020/11/13/travel-tip-traveling-diabetes>)

If you are traveling long distances by plane, car or train, walk the aisle or stop the car and get out for exercise every few hours in order to avoid blood clots.

Once at your destination, try to eat healthy food, although this can sometimes be difficult when traveling. Until you find that great little restaurant you and your traveling companions will fall in love with, tide yourself over with this **five-minute recipe for diabetes-friendly trail mix:**

Power Snack Mix

Ingredients:

- 1 cup multigrain cheerios
- 3 tbsp mini chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup almonds
- 1/3 cup dried cherries



Directions:

In a medium bowl, mix together all ingredients, then portion out into servings.

Source: The Diabetes Food Hub

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/manage-diabetes-heat.html#:~:text=Certain%20diabetes%20complications%2C%20such%20as,from%20their%20bodies%20more%20quickly> | <https://www.umassmed.edu/dcoe/diabetes-education/patient-resources/extreme-heat-and-diabetes/> | <https://www.bayhealth.org/community-health-and-wellness/blog/2021/august/heat-and-diabetes-six-tips-you-need-to-know> | <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-manage-your-diabetes-in-extreme-summer-heat/> | <https://www.jdrf.org/beat-the-heat/> | <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2020/11/13/travel-tip-traveling-diabetes> | <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/diabetes/traveling-with-diabetes> | <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10039694/>

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