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meet our contributors



Dr William Sukala

Clinical exercise physiologist Dr William Sukala offers valuable advice on sticking with an exercise plan (page 38). "The physical part of exercise is the easy bit, it's getting your mind on board that leads to lasting health changes. Just start where you feel most comfortable - it's all about momentum," says William.

Rachel Smith

Long-time *Diabetic Living* writer Rachel Smith talks to Tania Withers (page 133) about the legacy of years spent ignoring her diabetes. "She was warm, funny and positive, despite going blind at just 24," says Rachel. "Her story had an impact on me and I hope it inspires others. Tania is proof of how important it is to take care of your health."



Joanne Turner

Got a sweet tooth? Try the tasty snacks our dietitian Joanne Turner says are an acceptable part of a weight-controlled diet. The secret lies in portion sizes, so all of these options come in single serves. "Healthy snacking is a great way to include vital nutrients and it's important for blood glucose management," says Joanne. Go to page 44 and grab your shopping basket.




Emma Sterling

Are you part of the growing number of people who are overweight but undernourished? "We have many people getting more daily kilojoules than they need, yet these kilojoules often lack important nutrients like calcium and iron," says dietitian Emma Sterling. No wonder their bodies still crave food! Emma offers solutions on page 22.



Melanie Hearse

When health writer Melanie Hearse talked to GP Dr Joe Kosterich, he said 75 per cent of people with diabetes had problems with normal sweating. "I checked with him twice as this seemed so high!" she says. And like all niggling health issues, it can be a sign of something more severe. See what's at stake on page 34.



A **stop-start approach** to exercise can lead to harmful swings in your body weight.

Look at it like a loving relationship and make sure you have a regular date

GOING steady

Y

OU'VE PROBABLY HEARD

of yoyo dieting – weight swings linked with getting on and falling off the diet wagon – but what about yoyo exercising? If you have a hard time sticking with your exercise regimen and your garage looks like a graveyard for unwanted gadgets, then you could be a yoyo exerciser.

The problem is, not only can the ups and downs of yoyo exercising make you less likely to achieve your health goals, they can also contribute to potentially harmful swings in body weight (known as weight cycling). While a controversial topic among scientists, studies suggest that repeatedly losing weight, then regaining it, can lead to a higher body mass index and percentage of body fat, a bigger belly, lower protective HDL cholesterol and a slower metabolic rate – which can all contribute to lower self-esteem.

Exercise is a potent medicine for managing blood glucose levels (BGLs) and, for maximum long-term health, you need a regular dose of it. Muscle is a 'metabolic sponge' that, when mobilised, mops up excess sugar from your bloodstream. Results from the UK Prospective Diabetes Study show that even a one point drop in your HbA1c (an indicator of your BGLs over a few months) can greatly reduce the risk of diabetes complications and heart troubles. ➤

Cut the *yo-yo* exercise cord

Try the following ways to help you break out of the yo-yo exercising cycle and reap the rewards of regular physical activity.

➔ Select the best scene

Context can make or break your exercise habit, so set the stage for staying on track.

"I often tell my clients that your surroundings set you up for success," says Sydney-based exercise physiologist and diabetes researcher Dr Shelley Kay. "For example, zone in on the factors that make exercise enjoyable. Do you like to listen to music or do you like it quiet? Do you prefer individual or group exercise, social or competitive activities?"

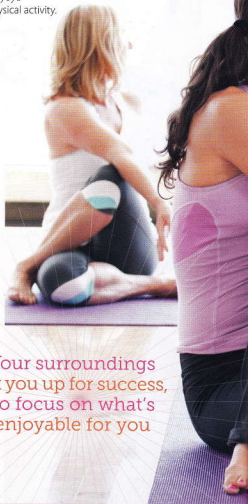
➔ Switch it, don't ditch it

If you find a work meeting or social function interferes with your scheduled exercise session, there's no need to stop it when you can swap it. Banish that all or nothing attitude to find ways around your exercise barriers. Make a list of alternative activities so when life gets in the way of you trying to stay healthy, you'll have other flexible options at your disposal.

Check out the Australian Government's Swap It Don't Stop It initiative at www.swapit.gov.au.

➔ Join a group

Exercising with other people can be a great incentive to get moving. Researchers from Flinders University in South Australia who looked into exercise motivators among Australian adults, aged from 63 to 86 years, found that the least active of them cited lack of facilities and knowledge of exercise options as the key hurdles standing in their way. If this sounds familiar, there's an easy remedy. The Heart Foundation offers over 1200 free walking groups around the country. Joining one of these groups is a great way to get free exercise guidance in a safe and social atmosphere. Visit www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/walking for more details.



Your surroundings set you up for success, so focus on what's enjoyable for you



➔ Put your mind to it

Health worries can turn people off exercising even when they're keen to keep fit, research shows. But the good news is that few conditions actually prevent us reaping the rewards of physical activity. In fact, The American College of Sports Medicine recommends low- to moderate-intensity exercise, such as walking, for people with type 2 diabetes who are affected by complications, including peripheral neuropathy, retinopathy and kidney impairment. If in doubt, all it needs is the all clear from your doctor, plus a well-fitted pair of walking shoes.

➔ Define your goals

Vague goals are the perfect prescription for failure. Goals without Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-oriented (SMART) criteria will leave you feeling directionless and more likely to fall off the exercise wagon – and clinging to the yoyo exercise string! Your desire to exercise is your compass, but SMART goals are the needle you need to reach your destination.

Instead of saying to yourself in an ambiguous way, "I want to lose weight", rephrase this in more defined, quantifiable terms by saying "I want to lose five kilos of stored body fat over the next three months".

Healthy fat loss is approximately one-half to one kilogram a week, so three months should be ample time for you to burn it off in a safe and effective manner.

➔ Go with the flow

Life can be unpredictable and you'll find that unplanned breaks in your exercise routine are bound to happen from time to time.

"It's important to accept that you will lapse in exercise once in a while," says Dr Amanda Sainsbury-Salis, obesity researcher and neuroscientist at the Garvan Institute in Sydney.

"There will be times when you may be very active, walking 12,000 steps every day, plus some vigorous gym sessions, and other times when you're less active due to personal or professional commitments. Give yourself permission to be human and gradually work back up to your usual activity levels," she adds. ➔

➔ Team up

Physical activity loves company, too! A New Zealand study, looking at the effects of exercise on the quality of life of people, around the 50 mark, who were obese and had type 2 diabetes, came up with some interesting insights. As well as making the participants feel better physically, the social engagement with fellow exercisers also enhanced their perceived sense of wellbeing and feeling connected – all of which made them want to come back for more. The added benefit of group exercise is that it creates an impromptu support network, where you can bounce thoughts and feelings off others who share common health conditions.

➔ Make it fun

Forget the outdated 'no pain, no gain' approach to exercise. Fun and functionality are today's must-haves in a successful work-out regimen.

"The exercise industry has moved away from its 'pumping iron' image and embraced more user-friendly free-form movements such as the ViPR [vitality, performance, reconditioning] fitness tool, which mimics real-life circumstances and can be adapted to any fitness level," says Jan Pearce of City Fitness in New Zealand. "The benefit of this type of exercise is that it simultaneously activates more upper and lower body muscle, burning more kilojoules and helping stabilise blood sugar levels."

Find out more at www.vipr.com.au.

➔ Be accountable

Just as you're required to be accountable to your supervisor at work, you need to make your commitment to exercise answerable to another person.

"Being accountable is a key ingredient for keeping your exercise regimen on track, which is so crucial given the documented benefits of physical activity for diabetes," adds Dr Kay. "Find someone to be accountable to – an exercise buddy, a friend, or even an exercise physiologist. I would advise against asking a family member, as you may find this creates a bit of an emotional tangle that could derail your efforts."

WORDS: DR WILLIAM SIKKALA, CLINICAL EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

DRY, CRACKED HEELS?

Good diabetic footcare can help avoid serious complications

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 - Check your feet regularly
 - Don't walk in bare feet

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