

Exercise can help reverse Diabetes.

Prof Adrian Kennedy

25 October 2022, Ras Al Khaimah, UAE: Exercise is a crucial tool in the management of diabetes and has been shown to reverse the condition in many instances. In their latest 'Diabeat' webinar on 'Exercise and Diabetes' organized as part of RAK Diabetes Challenge 2022 informative series, Professor Adrian Kennedy, Chief Wellness Officer at RAK Hospital highlighted the importance of exercise, its effect on insulin levels, various aspects of exercise formats, regime and the impacts of physical activity on the disease.

Speaking at the webinar, Prof Kennedy said, "Exercise is the magic pill for almost all ailments as it helps control weight, lower blood pressure, lower harmful LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, raise healthy HDL cholesterol, strengthen muscles and bones, reduce anxiety, and improve your general well-being. There are added benefits for people with diabetes, as exercise lowers blood glucose levels and boosts your body's sensitivity to insulin, countering insulin resistance."

Talking specifically about the benefits of exercise for Diabetics, Prof Kennedy first described the functioning of insulin in diabetes and said, "Insulin is utilized for the conversion of sugar into energy, if this is not functional and the energy is not being utilized then the residual sugar stays in the blood stream and also remains as a consequence within the organs of the body. This impacts the functions of the organs such including liver, kidney, eyes, nerves, etc. leading to dysfunction and problems. However, when we exercise it uses the energy in the blood & cells of the body, and benefits the diabetic person. In a nutshell, exercise helps manage prediabetes and type 2 diabetes by lowering blood glucose levels and improving insulin sensitivity throughout the body."

Elaborating on how building muscle can have an impact on diabetes, Prof Kennedy stated that exercise reverses muscular debility which is the strength and flexibility of the muscles. After the age of 20, we start losing the muscular capacity by 1% per year, which means by the age of 60 one would have reduced the functional capacity by 40% however this phenomenon can be reversed with exercise. Furthermore, we must not underrate the significance of muscles in the management of blood sugar as after we eat, 70 to 80 percent of the glucose in the body goes to muscles. So having a lower muscle mass can reduce our capacity to clear glucose from the bloodstream & organs of the body. Therefore, muscle strengthening can help maintain healthy blood sugar levels during the ageing process

Dr. Raza Siddiqui, Executive Director, RAK Hospital said, "It's great to see so many people taking charge of their health and coming forward to attend our educative webinar

series which tackles diabetes utilizing various methods including diet, exercise, yoga , stress management , alternative therapies, & medicine management. I congratulate the team on successfully conducting these sessions.”

Talking about the exercise protocols for Diabetics, Prof Kennedy recommended including stamina, strength and flexibility into the daily exercise schedule. Moreover, moderation and consistency are key when exercising. He also advised on making exercise a social activity and performing a talking test to see if you can continue talking without much difficulty when exercising if that happens it ensures that one is within the endurance limits for exercise. Anything, more than that is not advisable.

Prof Kennedy further explained that for diabetics, especially those on medication, seeking the doctor's approval before starting an exercise regime is extremely essential for managing hypoglycaemia. He explained that exercise beginners should check the blood sugar levels before, during and after exercise. If the level before exercise is below 100 mg/dL, eating a piece of fruit or having a small snack will help you avoid hypoglycemia. Testing again 30 minutes later, or after exercise, will show whether your blood sugar level is stable. In any case, if you feel weak, giddy, disoriented, then immediately stop exercising, have a snack & consult the doctor for advice. A doctors approval is also advisable if your blood sugar is too high (over 250).

He concluded by saying that exercise is therapeutic and should be done by people of all ages. Yoga, tai-chi, swimming, walking, gym exercises, are all great forms of exercises and should be part of the regime. Currently a typical office worker with a desk job walks less than a kilometer in a day whereas one requires a minimum of 5 to 7 kms or 10,000 steps or 30-60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise to have the benefits and to maintain a healthy body. Lifestyle activities, & an active life such as household work should be further supplemented by a moderate exercise program. At least 30 minutes of exercise activity 5 days a week can help the insulin in your body work better.

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