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## Exercise for type 2 diabetes – Supporting mental and physical health

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic conditions in Australia. Around [1.7 million](#) people live with this condition, and 85–90 per cent of cases are type 2. This [National Diabetes Week](#), Exercise Right is highlighting the fact that exercise can be used as medicine to both prevent and manage type 2 diabetes.

“The prevalence of diabetes is increasing at a frightening rate, with 280 Australians developing diabetes every day. That’s one person every five minutes,” says ESSA’s Accredited Exercise Physiologist of the Year for 2019, Ray Kelly, who works predominately with the diabetes population to achieve successful outcomes through exercise.

“Although we do not know the exact cause of type 2 diabetes, it is strongly associated with lifestyle risk factors that can be addressed through lifestyle changes.”

“Peoples’ risk of developing this condition is greatly increased by several factors including high blood pressure, overweight or obesity, insufficient physical activity, and poor diet,” says Mr. Kelly.

Although there is no known cure, exercise – when prescribed by a suitably qualified exercise professional – is a powerful tool for managing the physical effects of diabetes. Exercise helps to:

- Make insulin work more effectively
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Lower your blood pressure
- Reduce your risk of heart disease

“Simply adding 30-60 minutes of exercise each day will improve blood sugars and often lead to less medication being required,” adds Mr. Kelly.

Those living with diabetes also face a mental challenge each day, and the theme of this year’s awareness week highlights the mental anxiety of coping with a diagnosis of diabetes.

“Most with type 2 diabetes have seen many health professionals over the years regarding their condition, and the only change they have seen is a reduction in health and an increase in medications. This has a great effect on their mental health.”

All the patient needs are some quick results to build their confidence, and support without judgement. Within weeks they are walking into your office with their chin up and chest out, proud of what they achieved and motivated to maintain these changes long term,” continues Mr. Kelly.



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It's important that Australians understand the value of seeking advice from an expert when it comes to exercising with diabetes.

Accredited Exercise Physiologists are university-qualified allied health professionals who have the skills and knowledge to prescribe exercise as medicine for those living with chronic conditions like diabetes.

There's over 6,000 Accredited Exercise Physiologists around Australia, and this National Diabetes Week, we're encouraging those living with diabetes to seek help and advice when it comes to their individual exercise needs. Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) offer a search function which allows individuals to [find their local expert](#).

## Case Study – Managing Diabetes with Exercise

Alex was diagnosed with diabetes during a hospital stay in October 2019. He was suffering from depression, sleep apnoea and heart disease, and he weighed 125kg.

Instead of allowing the diagnosis to wear him down, Alex was driven to find a way to deal with all of his conditions. Alex spoke to his GP and was referred to an Accredited Exercise Physiologist who could prescribe him with an exercise program individualised just for him and his health.

Tanya Barnett, Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Director at Coordinated Fitness started working with Alex to develop a safe and effective exercise program that would assist with all his health conditions and give him a better quality of life.

"The benefits of exercise for patients living with diabetes [are] numerous. Our main focus is trying to maintain and manage blood sugar levels through exercise and also build strength so that the increased muscle mass can help them with managing their blood sugar levels," said Tanya.

Since October 2019 to July 2020, Alex has successfully lost 25kg; his muscle mass has increased from 69.9kg to 73.3kg; his body fat is down 7%; his fasting blood sugar levels are down from 10.2mmol/L to 6.5mmol/L; his HbA1c is down from 7.2mmol/mol to 5.2 mmol/mol; and his blood pressure is down from 138/97 to 122/82.

"I've lost 25kgs, my blood sugar is normal, my heart is perfect according to my doctor and my psychiatrist says I seem the most calm he's seen me in 10 years," said Alex.

"Accredited Exercise Physiologists are such an important part of the team. In my experience, I would never have been able to get my blood sugar down to where it is with just medication," Alex continued.

[View Alex's full story in the video here.](#)

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## About Exercise Right

Exercise Right is the public awareness vehicle of Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA). Exercise Right aims to inspire and educate all Australians to be healthier and more active. Exercise Right is expertly compiled by professionals and thought leaders in the field, making it a trusted source of information amongst consumers.

## About Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is the peak professional body for exercise and sports science in Australia. ESSA provides national leadership and advocacy on key issues and supports its members and the community through fostering excellence in professional practice, education and training, and research.