# Sugar Fix

Keep diabetes at bay through exercise

November 28, 2006 By Alicia Villarosa

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**My doctor says I'm borderline diabetic and if my blood sugar climbs higher, I'll need to take insulin. Can I exercise instead?** *—Too Sweet*

Your doctor is saying that you have prediabetes; that is when your blood sugar has risen to higher-than-normal levels but you aren't yet diabetic.

The sweet spot is that you can avert a crisis. Some basic lifestyle changes—better eating habits, weight loss, more exercise, no smoking—can keep you from traveling to diabetes (and medication) for years to come.

Regular workouts are nonnegotiable, even if you're not overweight. Moderate aerobic exercise (30 minutes a day five days a week) makes your cells absorb glucose, which lowers your blood sugar. Exercise also strengthens your heart, arteries and veins—all targets of diabetes damage—and helps you shed weight if you need to.

Make exercising fun, something you look forward to. That way you'll be consistent—key to collecting health benefits. You can work out in the comfort and privacy of your home:

1. Put on loose clothes, crank up your favorite funky music (old-school, hip-hop, whatever helps you get your groove on) and shake what your mama gave ya. Start slow to warm up, then graduate to faster beats. Take it up another notch by stepping up and down stairs or any raised surface six to ten inches high, by adding kicks and overhead arm moves or by raising your knees high on each step. Cool down to a slow jam and end with stretches. You can also invite a few friends to regular in-house sessions. The support of a group will help you keep at it and work harder—and you'll have more fun.
2. If you have the room, jump rope for ten minutes three times a day. Don't sweat the skipping skills; what's important is to keep moving to keep your heart rate up. Warm up first, and finish with some cool-down stretches.

Stick with the exercise and add some dietary improvements—check with the American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org; 800.342.2383) for more on diet—and you'll soon be easing on down the road to better health.

*Exercise instructor Alicia Villarosa runs a Pilates studio in Brooklyn.*

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