

Feel good in the forest: with diabetes

Introduction

Spending time in nature has many physical and mental health benefits for everyone. Engaging with natural spaces, such as forests, has been shown to help with relaxation, improve sleep, reduce anxiety and encourage physical activity. This fact sheet, developed by [Diabetes UK](#) and [Forestry England](#) provides information and top tips for enjoying movement in the outdoors with a diabetes diagnosis.

Diabetes, walking and spending time outdoors

Spending time in nature offers lots of benefits for everyone which includes:

- improved air quality
- higher levels of physical activity
- a reduction in serious health conditions
- higher levels of reported happiness and mental wellbeing¹

And walking in nature offers additional benefits for everyone, including people living with diabetes. These benefits include:

- helps relieve stress which can affect your blood sugar levels, and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- helps you build stamina, burn excess calories and make your heart healthier - increasing the speed at which you walk increases the benefits.
- is a low-risk activity because it's easy on your joints.²

Diabetes and physical activity

If you are living with diabetes moving in a way that works for you can help you in many ways including:

- It helps the body use insulin better
- It helps you look after your blood pressure
- It helps you improve your cholesterol level
- It helps you lose weight if you need to, and keep the weight off after you've lost it
- It gives you energy and helps you get a good night's sleep
- It helps your joints and flexibility
- It helps reduce your stress levels
- It helps improve your HbA1c if you have type 2 diabetes
- It helps your mind as well as your body, as moving more can lead to the release of feel-good hormones called endorphins, which can lift your mood³

¹ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/why-forests-are-good-health-and-wellbeing>

² <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/living-with-diabetes/exercise/walking-with-diabetes>

³ [Your guide to moving more | Free diabetes information - Diabetes UK Shop](#)

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What to consider when you're enjoying time outdoors with diabetes

Enjoying the outdoors is highly beneficial for managing diabetes. Here are some top tips, provided by Diabetes UK, for enjoying the outdoors safely:

- Monitor your blood sugar levels if you have the equipment to do this.
- Stay hydrated
- Wear well fitting, comfortable footwear
- Check your feet. To help prevent any problems with your feet, you should check them every day and look for any changes. Doing this after a walk is really important, as it can help you to spot any damage, such as blisters or cuts.
- If you're living with foot complications, you should speak to your healthcare team before you take up serious walking.
- Make sure you're wearing comfortable footwear
- Avoid extreme temperatures

More information is available at www.diabetes.org.uk

Find your feel good in the forest

[Get active in nature](#)

- The sensory experience of the forest helps increase motivation and enhances our enjoyment of physical activity.
- Walking, running and cycling are great ways to explore the outdoors. Forestry England has waymarked trails of a range of distances so you can choose a route that works for you.

[Relax and unwind in the forest](#)

- Slowing down and taking time to notice nature can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and promote a state of relaxation.
- Forestry England's [wellbeing trails](#) will guide you through a series of exercises that help build your emotional connection with nature, and yourself. If you don't have a trail local to you, you can download the 'my forest wellbeing journal' and use in any natural space.

[Connect with friends, family and the forest](#)

- The longevity of trees and forests means they often carry an emotional connection for people and provide a sense of time, connection with place and memories. They also offer a meeting place to come together with friends and family.
- People even get on with each other better when they're immersed in the natural world - one study revealed that people were actually more sociable after spending time in the woods!
- Invite a friend to join you for a cup of coffee, pack a picnic or enjoy a walk with a friend.

Feel good in the forest: with diabetes

Know before you go

- Find your nearest Forestry England forest using the postcode search on the homepage of the website: [Visit a forest or woodland | Forestry England](#)
- Every Forestry England forest webpage has information on the facilities available at that forest - for example, whether there are toilet facilities, accessible parking or easy access trails to follow.
- Find out more: [Accessibility information | Forestry England](#)

Useful links

- www.diabetes.org.uk
- www.forestryengland.uk

Thank you to Diabetes UK for their help producing this information sheet.

