

## Planning an Exercise Program For Persons Living with Type 2 Diabetes

Lifestyle plays an important role in the management of type 2 diabetes. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA),

*“Scientists believe that lifestyle and type 2 diabetes are closely linked. This means that lifestyle is one area individuals can focus on to help prevent or delay the onset of the disease. A healthy diet, weight control, exercise and reduction in stress are important prevention steps.”*

The CDA further describes the numerous benefits that exercise has on type 2 diabetes,

*Regular exercise helps your body lower blood sugars, promotes weight loss, reduces stress, and enhances overall fitness.”*

With the knowledge that exercise is beneficial to the health of people with type 1 and 2 diabetes, the following provides basic information on the different steps to take when planning a fitness program. The guidelines have been adapted from the program outlined in the book, *“Healthy Happy Aging”*.<sup>1</sup> **Keep in mind that participants, especially those with type 1 and 2 diabetes, should not start an exercise program without consulting their physician.**

### **Step 1: Consult with the people living with diabetes in your community**

To help you design a more personalized fitness program, find out the following information about the future participants:

- What is their average age?
- What is their level of fitness?
- What do they like or not like about physical activity?

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<sup>1</sup> Wagorn, Yvonne, Sonia Theberge, and Dr. William A.R. Orban. *Healthy Happy Aging*. Burnstown, Ontario: The General Store Publishing House Inc., 1991.

- What type of exercise do they want? (e.g. Aerobic? Cooperative games? Dances? Walking? Muscle strengthening exercises using weights?)
- What are their expectations? (e.g. Do they want to improve their level of activity? Learn new techniques? Lose weight? Have fun? Socialize and participate in activities with their peers?)
- When should the program be offered? (e.g. how many times per week? At what time? How long should each class last?)

The “*Vitality Exercise Program*” in Kahnawake, Quebec, is an exercise program targeted for adults having difficulty starting or maintaining a regular fitness routine due to various reasons: they may be challenged by health problems, are new to exercise, are de-conditioned, have no desire to exercise, or are unable to attend mainstream activities because they are just too difficult.

The participants expect the following from this program:

1. A safe environment for exercise
2. Increased physical fitness (cardio capacity, muscle strength, flexibility and agility)
3. A social aspect

### **Step 2: Decide where the program will be held**

- Is there a local gymnasium? (e.g. located at a community centre or school?)
- Is there a local community hall?

It is recommended that before offering location choices to the participants, the facilities should be checked out. (e.g. Is there a change room? Washrooms? Parking? Is it within walking distance to a bus stop?)

### **Step 3: Decide on the qualities of the instructor**

- Should the instructor be the same age, younger or older than the participants?
- Which type of training should these leaders have? (e.g. Basic fitness training? University training?)
- Does the group want to use one of their peers as a leader?
- If one of the participants does become a leader, where will he/she get some basic training in fitness?

### **Step 4: Seek guidance from the fitness experts**

To help you develop the best possible program, consult with specialists in the field of physical activity, fitness organizations and institutions. This will ensure that your program is safe and includes the latest findings in the area of physical fitness.

The reasons for seeking advice are as follows:

- **Physical activity specialists** can provide information and material on various features of physical activity, such as: teaching, evaluation, motivation and rules of specific sports.
- **Fitness organizations** have expertise in an area (e.g. Bicycling organizations) and are authorized to give advice to people on how to practice certain activities safely and correctly.
- **Institutions** such as local recreation departments, private recreation organizations (e.g. YMCA, universities, colleges) may offer fitness programs and possess expertise in this area.

An added bonus to consulting with fitness organizations and institutions is that you may discover that they are offering the same type of

program you are trying to develop. For the most part, these organizations will be happy to offer assistance in helping you plan your fitness program.

The *Vitality Exercise Program* planners consulted with the Health Canada program model “*Vitality*”, research studies and literature on people who are challenged. In addition, participants fill in the “Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire” (PAR-Q) to help them decide whether they need to check with their doctor before becoming much more physically active. Note: See “Additional Resources” at the end of this section for more information about the PAR-Q.

### **Step 5: Develop your goals**

After the groundwork has been done, it is now possible to use that information to develop the goals of your program. See the example described in the box below:

- The **goals** of the *Vitality Exercise Program* are:
- To help participants learn to involve themselves safely and comfortably in physical activity
  - To motivate participants to maintain a fitness program
  - To instil confidence in the participants’ ability to become active
  - To facilitate support within the group

## Step 6: Develop your objectives

Once you have decided upon your overall **goals**, it is now time to develop the **objectives** to reach those goals. In the box below, you will see how the *Vitality Exercise Program* used their goals to develop a series of objectives:

The **objectives** of the *Vitality Exercise Program* are:

All participants will:

- Be able to increase and decrease the level of intensity in order that they may individualize any physical activity.
- Work safely at their own pace.
- Learn the basics of the relationship between exercise and the body
- Have fun!

## Designing your program

Now the groundwork has been done: you have consulted with the people living with diabetes in your community to find out what their needs and expectations are, decided where the fitness program will be held and on the qualities of the instructor, sought guidance from fitness experts and developed your goals and objectives.

You have gathered enough knowledge and expertise to confidently proceed onto the next step: **DESIGNING YOUR PROGRAM**. You can now design a fitness program that meets the needs of the person living with diabetes in your community. You will have to make the following decisions:

- What will the content be?
- Who will the leader be?
- When will the classes take place?
- Where will the classes be held?

- What is the registration procedure?
- How will the program be promoted?
- How will the program be funded?
- How will the program be evaluated?

### **The benefits of belonging to a fitness group – 5 years later:**

Mildred, a woman who has type 2 diabetes, has been a regular participant of the *Vitality Exercise Group* for 5 years now. She was one of the first persons to join this group which was initially set up to teach safe, comfortable exercises to people living with diabetes to help them take control over their diabetes. She speaks about how this program has helped her:

*“I personally have benefitted much from the exercise program set up for the diabetes group. It has helped me keep my diabetes under control, my weight has dropped and I feel so good and energized after a good workout. I look forward to each session to “enjoy” the exercise program designed for our personal special needs.*

*We have the support of our medical center and our instructor has worked hard to keep our needs in mind. With this support system, I, along with many others, have been given the incentive that we need... ”TO KEEP ACTIVE.”*

## Additional Resources

### 1. The Vitality Approach – A Program Guide for Leaders

The *Vitality* approach promotes a holistic approach to feeling good about oneself, eating well and being active. Using this program does not necessarily mean starting a new program from scratch -- *Vitality* concepts can be integrated into existing programs. It is designed to be used by Leaders working in the health promotion field, especially in the areas of healthy eating, active living and fitness, and healthy weights.

To obtain a copy of the *Vitality* guide, write, telephone or fax:

Publications, Health Canada,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9  
(613) 954-5995 (Tel)  
(613) 941-5366 (Fax)

You can download a copy from the Internet at:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pube/vitality/index.html>

### 2. Physical Activity Readiness Quiz (PAR-Q)

The seven questions in the PAR-Q can help persons (between the ages of 15-69) decide whether they need to check with their doctor before becoming much more physically active. To download or complete the questionnaire on the Internet, go to:

<http://thriveonline.oxygen.com/medical/osteo/tools.parq1.html>