

ASK THE ATHLETE

A Resource for Active People with Diabetes



Nikki Wallis, Mountain and Adventure Sports

My Link: www.mountain-mad.org & www.active-diabetes.co.uk

Two personally recommended books:

“Think like a Pancreas” Gary Scheiner CDE

“Diabetic Athletes Handbook 2009” Dr Sheri Colberg-Ochs PhD

About Me: I am an active mountain sports enthusiast (rock-climbing, mountain walking, fell running, mountain biking, alpine climbing, high altitude trekking and mountaineering, scrambling, skiing, ice climbing). I have traveled widely with my diabetes to many remote locations in the world and I won the DESA Athletic Achievement Award in 2005. I have had Type 1 diabetes for 15 years and I have been using an insulin pump for the last 8 years.

My FAQs	My Response
<p>1. How do you successfully manage your diabetes for your mountain sports?</p>	<p>By knowing my own diabetes inside out, and having a flexible diabetes management system that enables me to balance my exercise with my food intake e.g. rock climbing has a different effect on me than say trail walking. Frequent blood glucose monitoring, and consideration of the effect of the elements and the surrounding environment so that you are prepared for anything!</p>
<p>2. How should I start mountain climbing or adventure sports?</p>	<p>With realistic safe goals. Because the sport inherently puts you and your colleagues in possibly riskier than normal situations, you must be in good control of your diabetes management. If you don't do any exercise yet – start out on an exercise plan indoors first, then move the exercise to the outdoors. Get advice on how the outdoors may affect your diabetes management, and learn how to minimize the effects of the outdoors environment on you and your diabetes. In mountaineering there are many specific technical skills that can take years to learn. It is well advised to go on a recognized course or join a recognized club where you can meet and learn from others. Such skills include rope work, use of axe and crampons and map navigation skills. Prepare well in advance and always plan for contingencies – diabetes wise or mountain wise.</p>
<p>3. What training do you do for mountain climbing?</p>	<p>In between mountain sports, a good way to keep fit is the same as with all sports – a combination of aerobic and strength training, such as mountain biking, swimming, running, the multigym and the climbing wall. I always start the year on easy routes in good weather and then progress as I feel comfortable through the season with more technically difficult and longer routes both at home and at higher altitudes.</p>
<p>4. How do you test your blood glucose when you are in the cold and when you are rock climbing?</p>	<p>I have a thin inner pair of gloves with a small deliberate hole on one finger. This allows me to test my blood glucose through the hole whilst also still keeping my hands warm. When rock climbing, I either use my little finger to prick, or use AST (alternate site testing) so that I don't end up with sore fingers or blood on my climbing holds!</p>
<p>5. What about high altitude and diabetes?</p>	<p>There have been numerous studies into high altitude physiology, the effect of high altitude on diabetes, and the effect of some altitude sickness drugs and diabetes. The topic is too numerous to cover in depth here, but in essence, you should acclimatize slowly (no more than 300m altitude gain per day), be flexible and prepared with your diabetes management (protect insulin and diabetes equipment from the heat and cold), be aware of the signs and symptoms of acute mountain sickness, pulmonary oedema and cerebral oedema, maintain adequate hydration and blood test frequently to establish your own diabetes profile.</p>

BE ACTIVE! BE FIT! BE HEALTHY!

Disclaimer

Content provided here is for “informational purposes only”. Please consult with your physician before starting an exercise program or incorporating information contained here into your exercise program, training regimen or competition events.

Your physician or exercise professional should help you develop an exercise prescription with careful consideration of your diabetes control, complications, and other health problems; risk factors for cardiovascular disease; personal goals; and exercise preferences.

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