



Sun Dance and Diabetes

The Sundance Ceremony is one of the most dramatic of Native American ceremonies but it is still fundamentally spiritual to the people who take part. Four days of outdoor dancing and visiting with friends and relatives from across the country is very spiritual. For those who choose to undergo the piercing and tearing of their flesh, the pain and its release can put the everyday challenges of managing diabetes in a new perspective. A number of Native Americans with diabetes have used the Sundance to develop the deep spirituality needed for managing their diabetes. The Sundance can make living with diabetes seem easy.

Use the pledge year before the Sundance to minimize your medications through diet and exercise while maintaining good sugar control. Both traditional and western medicines can help you do this.

Test your blood sugar regularly throughout the Sundance. If you are going to fast during the Sundance, develop a treatment plan with your health care provider that can be used with fasting.



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If you are going to do a sweat during the Sundance, drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration and high blood sugars.

New wounds should be treated as soon as practical to speed the healing.

Finally, since diabetes dramatically increases the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke, it is important that you know their warning signs and symptoms.

Talk with other diabetics who have gone through a Sundance. Talk with the leaders. Your health care provider can help you contact leaders who have offered to guide those who truly want to undertake a Sundance but are concerned about their diabetes. They can help you avoid the potential problems and gain the benefits of one of the most profound spiritual experiences in Native American religion.

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