CHAPTER 4 EXCERPT: STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING BLOOD SUGAR DURING CARDIO

There are two levers you can adjust when it comes to managing your blood sugar during and after cardio:

1. What you eat
2. Your blood sugar-regulating drugs (any drug that gets impacted by exercise such as insulin and Type 2 diabetes drugs like Amaryl and Prandin).

It’s not always easy to figure out how to adjust those two levers, but there are some general guidelines available.

General guidelines

In January 2017, the first official consensus statement on exercise and type 1 diabetes was published in the Lancet. I’ve highlighted the main recommendations from the statement in the figure below. It contains the general guidelines for insulin and carb consumption for exercise lasting longer than 30 minutes.

As per the guidelines, there are several options for insulin reduction regardless of whether the cardio is done fasting or non-fasting. The idea is not that you have to implement all of the recommendations, but that they are options to play around with if you’d like. Given they all address how to reduce the risk of low blood sugar, they are mainly relevant for aerobic cardio.


Fasting cardio using an insulin pump

If you’re fasting (meaning you haven’t eaten and bolused within the last four hours) and using an insulin pump, you can start making insulin reductions 90 minutes before your workout to ensure that you have a limited amount of Insulin On Board (IOB). You never want to be completely without IOB since that can lead to DKA even if your blood sugar is within range.

If that is not enough, you can disconnect or suspend your pump for up to 60 minutes during your workout.
If that is still not enough (I’d argue that with time you can find a reduction and suspension combination that will be sufficient), you can consume 10-20 g of carbs.

**Fasting cardio using MDI (Multiple Daily Injections)**

You don’t have as many options if you’re on MDI (like I am), but you can reduce your basal if you take it in the morning; however, doing so increases the risk of high blood sugar for the rest of the day.

If you’re fasting and exercising in the morning, you may find that you don’t need any insulin adjustments since that is the time of day when you are the most insulin resistant and have the least insulin in your system.

If you tend to go low regardless of being fasted you may have to break the fast and eat 20-30 g of carbs.