

## Diabetes and Scuba Diving

Diabetes is a widespread and complicated illness. Like most diseases that aren't completely understood, doctors often take an overly conservative stance when patients ask what they are and are not allowed to do.



Such has been the case for the past 20 years in scuba diving, with doctors flat out denying the privilege to insulin-requiring diabetics. In the past five years, however, that's starting to change.

Data has come out that some diabetics are still scuba diving, and not dying. This has caused the diving medicine community, in particular, the Divers Alert Network (DAN), to revisit their stance on diabetics and recreational scuba diving.

If you are a DAN member, you have access to an online seminar concerning recent policy changes on diabetes and scuba diving. When logged in to the site, access it through Training & Education, Online Seminars.

Included in the approximately hour-long seminar is a PDF summary of guidelines for scuba diving diabetics. Here is an **incomplete** sample:

- Delay diving after starting or changing medication.
- No episodes in the previous year.
- No significant secondary complications.
- No depths greater than 100 ft (30 m) or 60 minutes.
- No decompression stops.
- Both you and your buddy should not be diabetic.

There are more, and you should consult the seminar if this applies to you, your friends, or if you are an instructor curious how to handle diabetics interested in diving.

I think it's great that DAN has revisited long-standing policies to come up with an intelligent, yet simple set of guidelines to increase the ranks of potential scuba divers.

In my experience, I've found the medical community to be conservative about anything related to scuba diving. It basically comes down to the fact that we understand so little about our bodies and their response to the underwater environment. This is true with a healthy body, so change one variable and the doctors' default to a "no".