

Diabetes: Basic Nutrition Guidelines for Management

Your individualized meal plan will include the number of servings you should eat each day from carbohydrate, protein and fat. However, the amount of carbohydrate or “carbs” that you eat affects your blood glucose/sugar level more than anything else in your diet. Foods that are high in carbohydrate are found in the Starch, Fruit and Milk groups, while the Vegetable group contains a small amount of carbohydrate. The Meat and Fat groups contain little or no carbohydrate. The amount of carbohydrate you eat at each meal and snack will primarily determine how high your blood glucose/sugar level subsequently rises.

Meal Planning for Diabetes

- Work with your Registered Dietitian or Certified Diabetes Educator to develop a meal plan personalized for your type of diabetes, medication, food preferences, lifestyle and goals (e.g. weight loss).
- Eat 3 meals and snacks (if needed) at relatively consistent times every day. Skipping scheduled meals and snacks can lead to large fluctuations in blood glucose levels.
- Eat about the same amount of carbohydrate at meals and snacks each day to help keep your blood glucose in control.
- Monitor your blood glucose level closely whenever you try new foods, vary your meal plan, or change your exercise routine.
- Plan for exercise, which helps control your blood glucose level by making your body’s cells more sensitive to insulin. For example, take a 10-20 minute walk after one or all meals each day.
- Eat a variety of foods each day including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean meats.
- Eat sweets, salty foods and fried foods in small amounts. Choose water or sugar-free beverages instead of juices, regular soda, sweet tea, or other sugar-sweetened soft drinks.
- Remember that your meal plan is individualized for you only. Each person with diabetes may have a slightly different meal plan.

Carbohydrate Food Sources:

- **Starch** – found in bread, pasta, cereals, grains, potatoes, beans, peas, lentils and corn
- **Sugar** – found naturally in fruits, milk and yogurt
- **Added Sugar** – found in desserts, candy, jams, syrups and sweetened food products (i.e., cereals, yogurt, beverages and baked goods)

Types of Fats and food sources:

- **Monounsaturated** (very healthy) – olive, canola, peanut oils

- ***Polyunsaturated*** (healthy) – walnuts, omega-3 (i.e., fish)
- ***Saturated*** (unhealthy) – most animal fats, bacon, butter, lard
- ***Trans*** (unhealthy) – stick margarine, baked goods, fried food

Carbohydrate Counting

- 15 grams carbohydrate = 1 carbohydrate serving
- 30 grams carbohydrate = 2 carbohydrate servings
- 45 grams carbohydrate = 3 carbohydrate servings
- 60 grams carbohydrate = 4 carbohydrate servings

Exercise with Diabetes

- Always check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.
- Check blood glucose/sugar before exercise – do NOT exercise if blood glucose is less than 100 or greater than 240 with ketones.
- Begin your exercise program slowly - gradually increase *duration* (minutes/ exercise session), *intensity* (difficulty level) and *frequency* (times/week).
- Try to work up to 30-60 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise at least 3 to 6 times per week.
- Carry glucose tablets or a carbohydrate-containing snack with you in case of low blood sugar.
- Discuss a snack plan for exercise with your Registered Dietitian or Certified Diabetes Educator.
- Drink plenty of fluids – water and sugar-free beverages.
- Wear your ID bracelet while exercising.
- Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.
- Check your feet regularly for any sores or blisters that may develop.
- Check blood glucose again after exercise.

[Recipes](#)

If you need further assistance with these recommendations, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian (R.D.) who can help you with additional nutrition education, cooking suggestions, shopping tips, menu planning, and individualizing a diet to meet your lifestyle needs.

References on file