

MEAL PLANNING FOR DIABETES



Cigna Medical Group diabetes education

Eating healthy is important for all of us. It is especially important if you have been diagnosed with diabetes. There is not one specific meal plan for diabetes. It depends on your blood glucose and other test results, as well as your weight control goals. A member of your health care team can help you create a food plan to meet your individual needs.

What should I eat?

It is important to have a meal plan that includes a healthy balance of carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

Carbohydrates - This nutrient has the greatest impact on blood glucose and should be eaten in moderation. Foods that contain carbohydrates include:

Grains	Starchy vegetables	Fruits	Milk	Sweets (added fat and calories)
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To see how a meal affects your blood glucose, test your blood glucose before you eat and about two hours later. Work with your physician and health care team to determine what your target goals should be, and to develop a program of regular blood glucose monitoring to manage your diabetes.¹

Proteins - Most people with diabetes should follow the same protein guidelines as people without diabetes, although this may vary depending on your individual health requirements. Foods that contain protein with minimal impact on blood glucose include:

Lean pork	Eggs	Skinless chicken	Fish	Lean beef
Cheese	Tuna	Deli meats	Cottage cheese	Frankfurters

Remember that the fat from red meat will increase your caloric and saturated fat intake.²

Fats - Though they have a minimum impact on blood glucose, it is recommended for most people, including those with diabetes, to limit the use of saturated and trans fats. Some examples of these types of fats include:

Butter	Stick margarine	Shortening	Ice cream
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Try using smaller amounts of these fats or change to healthier fats, such as:

Liquid (plant-based) oils	Avocados	Nuts
Seeds	Olives	

Remember that coconut and palm oils are higher in saturated fat and should be eaten less often.³

Non-starchy vegetables and other foods - You can enjoy many vegetables and other foods in moderation. These cause little or no increase in blood glucose. Some of these are listed below.

Non-starchy vegetables			
Asparagus	Green Beans	Beets	Broccoli
Brussels sprouts	Cabbage	Carrots	Cauliflower
Celery	Cucumbers	Eggplant	Greens
Jicama	Lettuce	Mushrooms	Okra
Onions	Peppers	Radishes	Sauerkraut
Spinach	Tomatoes	Turnips	Zucchini

No- or low-carbohydrate foods							
Almond milk, unsweetened	Artificial sweeteners	Avocado, 1-2 tablespoons	Broth or bouillon	Coffee, black and sugar-free	Club or diet soda	Drink mixes, sugar-free	Flavored water (unsweetened)
Flavoring extracts	Gelatin, sugar-free	Herbs	Lemon	Lime	Mustard	Mayonnaise	Olives

When should I eat?

Eating the same amount of carbohydrates at the same time every day can help to keep your blood glucose levels closer to the target range. Many people find that eating smaller amounts of food four to six times a day instead of eating two or three big meals, meets their energy needs and keeps them from getting too hungry. It also helps to keep blood glucose levels from going too high after a big meal.⁴

How many carbohydrates should I eat?

A list of foods containing carbohydrates is included to assist you. Each item shows an amount that is equal to **one serving** or **15 grams** of carbohydrates. It is recommended that most meals have 45–60 grams of carbohydrates and less carbohydrates for snacks. The amount of carbohydrates required varies with each person and depends on various factors such as medications, blood glucose targets, activity level, degree of insulin resistance and other individual differences. Check with your provider and health care team to determine the carbohydrate level needed for you.

Breads, grains and starches						
1 oz. slice bread	½ English muffin or bun	½ small bagel	1 (6-inch) tortilla, flour or corn	6 crackers, saltine type	6–10 chips or pretzels (¾ oz.)	3 cups popcorn
¼ cup granola or muesli	½ cup bran cereal	½ cup sugar-coated cereal	1½ cup puffed cereal	¾ cup unsweetened RTE cereal	½ cup cooked cereal	½ cup cooked pasta or rice
Starchy vegetables						
½ cup mashed potatoes	½ cup sweet potatoes or yams	½ cup peas or corn	1 cup winter squash	½ cup cooked beans or lentils		
Fruits						
1¼ cup watermelon	1¼ cup strawberries	2 tablespoons dried fruit	1 small fresh fruit	½ medium banana	1 cup honeydew	
1 cup cantaloupe	½ cup fruit juice, orange or apple					
Dairy						
1 cup milk, any type	1 cup plain yogurt					
Sweets (added fat and calories)						
½ cup ice cream	½ cup sugar-free pudding	1 oz. chocolate, dark or milk type		2 inch square cake, no icing		

NOTE: Count carbohydrates in each food group when using combination foods or combined food groups.

Staying on track

Taking care of your diabetes may include making adjustments to your current eating habits. It also may involve making changes from time to time as you learn how your food impacts your blood glucose, weight and other test results. Stay in touch with your doctor and members of your health care team. They are available for you every step of the way.

1. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, November 2016, www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/diet-eating-physical-activity
2. American Diabetes Association, October 2017, www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/what-can-i-eat/making-healthy-food-choices/meat-and-plant-based-protein.html
3. Circulation, June 2017, circ.ahajournals.org/content/early/2017/06/15/CIR.0000000000000510
4. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, November 2014, www.eatright.org/resource/health/diseases-and-conditions/diabetes/diabetes-and-diet



This information is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. Please consult with your doctor before beginning any diet program – particularly if you have health concerns. Your doctor can help you determine if a diet program is right for you.

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