

Learning About Diabetes Food Guidelines



Your Care Instructions

Meal planning is important to manage diabetes. It helps keep your blood sugar at a target level (which you set with your doctor). You don't have to eat special foods. You can eat what your family eats, including sweets once in a while. But you do have to pay attention to how often you eat and how much you eat of certain foods.

You may want to work with a dietitian or a certified diabetes educator (CDE) to help you plan meals and snacks. A dietitian or CDE can also help you lose weight if that is one of your goals.

What should you know about eating carbs?

Managing the amount of carbohydrate (carbs) you eat is an important part of healthy meals when you have diabetes. Carbohydrate is found in many foods.

- Learn which foods have carbs. And learn the amounts of carbs in different foods.
 - Bread, cereal, pasta, and rice have about 15 grams of carbs in a serving. A serving is 1 slice of bread (1 ounce), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked cereal, or $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of cooked pasta or rice.
 - Fruits have 15 grams of carbs in a serving. A serving is 1 small fresh fruit, such as an apple or orange; $\frac{1}{2}$ of a banana; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked or canned fruit; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice; 1 cup of melon or raspberries; or 2 tablespoons of dried fruit.
 - Milk and no-sugar-added yogurt have 15 grams of carbs in a serving. A serving is 1 cup of milk or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of no-sugar-added yogurt.
 - Starchy vegetables have 15 grams of carbs in a serving. A serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of mashed potatoes or sweet potato; 1 cup winter squash; $\frac{1}{2}$ of a small baked potato; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked beans; or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked corn or green peas.
- Learn how much carbs to eat each day and at each meal. A dietitian or CDE can teach you how to keep track of the amount of carbs you eat. This is called carbohydrate counting.

- If you are not sure how to count carbohydrate grams, use the Plate Method to plan meals. It is a good, quick way to make sure that you have a balanced meal. It also helps you spread carbs throughout the day.
 - Divide your plate by types of foods. Put non-starchy vegetables on half the plate, meat or other protein food on one-quarter of the plate, and a grain or starchy vegetable in the final quarter of the plate. To this you can add a small piece of fruit and 1 cup of milk or yogurt, depending on how many carbs you are supposed to eat at a meal.
- Try to eat about the same amount of carbs at each meal. Do not "save up" your daily allowance of carbs to eat at one meal.
- Proteins have very little or no carbs per serving. Examples of proteins are beef, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, tofu, cheese, cottage cheese, and peanut butter. A serving size of meat is 3 ounces, which is about the size of a deck of cards. Examples of meat substitute serving sizes (equal to 1 ounce of meat) are 1/4 cup of cottage cheese, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, and 1/2 cup of tofu.

How can you eat out and still eat healthy?

- Learn to estimate the serving sizes of foods that have carbohydrate. If you measure food at home, it will be easier to estimate the amount in a serving of restaurant food.
- If the meal you order has too much carbohydrate (such as potatoes, corn, or baked beans), ask to have a low-carbohydrate food instead. Ask for a salad or green vegetables.
- If you use insulin, check your blood sugar before and after eating out to help you plan how much to eat in the future.
- If you eat more carbohydrate at a meal than you had planned, take a walk or do other exercise. This will help lower your blood sugar.

What else should you know?

- Limit saturated fat, such as the fat from meat and dairy products. This is a healthy choice because people who have diabetes are at higher risk of heart disease. So choose lean cuts of meat and nonfat or low-fat dairy products. Use olive or canola oil instead of butter or shortening when cooking.
- Don't skip meals. Your blood sugar may drop too low if you skip meals and take insulin or certain medicines for diabetes.
- Check with your doctor before you drink alcohol. Alcohol can cause your blood sugar to drop too low. Alcohol can also cause a bad reaction if you take certain diabetes medicines.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **I147** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Diabetes Food Guidelines**".

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