

What Can I Eat?

Many people think that having diabetes requires a special diet. The diabetes diet, however, is a healthy, enjoyable one, and suitable for the entire family. Learning what you can eat and how different foods affect your body is important. Although food is not the only factor that raises glucose, your food choices have a significant impact on your glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure and, of course, your overall health.

This handout covers the basic principles of good nutrition. For a tailored plan, consult a dietitian-certified diabetes educator, or call the **Center for Diabetes Services at (415) 600-0506**.

What Foods Turn Into Glucose?

Carbohydrate turns into glucose. Sugars and starches are the carbohydrates in our diet. These foods are our main source of energy. Too much carbohydrate in the diet can raise your blood glucose levels too high. It is important to limit your total carbohydrate intake at each meal.

What are Some Examples of Foods that Contain Carbohydrate?

Rice	Fruits	Pretzels/Popcorn	Potato*
Lentils	Fruit juices	Pasta/Noodles	Yams*
Dried beans	Sugar/Honey	Crackers	Peas*
Milk	Desserts	Bread	Corn*
Yogurt	Sodas	Cereals	Lima beans*

*These vegetables are starchy and raise blood glucose.

Note: High fiber food choices are encouraged (for example, whole grain breads and cereals; fresh fruits and vegetables; beans and legumes).

General Nutrition Recommendations

- Include carbohydrate in every meal and snack. Be sure to spread your carbohydrate intake evenly throughout the day.
- Do not skip meals. Even distribution of food helps prevent high and low blood glucose.
- Eat 3 meals a day, plus snacks as needed. Eating at regular intervals helps control hunger and prevents overeating at the next meal.
- Time your food intake to the action of your diabetes medication.

What Other Things Can I Do to Improve My Healthy Eating?

1. **Eat a Well Balanced Diet with a Variety of Foods at Each Meal:** For example, there is no limit on vegetables and green salads. These foods are filling, nutritious, and raise blood glucose very little. Also, be sure to include moderate amounts of low-fat protein. Protein helps to control hunger between meals.

Protein examples:

- **Poultry:** chicken or turkey (white meat, no skin)
 - **Fish:** cod, flounder, trout, tuna, salmon, catfish, sardines
 - **Lamb:** roast, chop, leg
 - **Shellfish:** clams, crab, lobster, scallops, shrimp
 - **Beef:** sirloin, round, flank steak, lean ground beef
 - **Other:** egg whites, low-fat cottage cheese, cheeses (less than 3 grams of fat per ounce), tofu, dried beans and lentils
 - **Alternative proteins:** nuts, nut butter (Note: these sources are high in fat)
2. **Limit Your Intake of Fat, Especially Animal Fat:** Fat does not raise blood glucose, but can lead to being overweight. Excess body weight can raise blood glucose. A high-fat diet also increases your risk of heart disease.

High-fat Foods

High-fat meats	Skin on poultry	Chips
Sausages, luncheon meats	Crackers	Whole milk
All fried foods	Refried beans	Cheeses
Pastries, cookies		

Fats Added to Foods

Butter, margarine	Cream cheese	Cream, half & half
Salad dressings, oil	Gravies, cream sauces	Sour cream

Use Healthful Fats: Do not aim for a "fat free" diet. A small amount of fat at each meal makes it tastier and helps to control hunger between meals. Choose monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil, peanut oil, canola oil, olives, nuts, seeds and avocado.

3. **Be Careful with Alcohol:** Drink alcohol only when your diabetes is controlled and with your health care provider's approval. Drink in moderation, not more than one drink a couple of times a week, and never on an empty stomach. Alcohol can interfere with some diabetes medications and insulin and put you at risk for low glucose.
4. **Reduce Your Sodium Intake:** A low sodium diet may help to control your blood pressure. Be aware of foods with high sodium content such as canned goods, cured or pickled foods and seasonings (soy sauce, garlic salt). A "low sodium" item has under 140 mg of sodium per serving. The American Heart Association recommends having less than 2300 mg of sodium total per day.

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).