

Healthy Eating with Diabetes

Your body's cells need sugar for energy. Some of the food you eat breaks down into sugar (glucose) and travels in your blood to all your cells. Insulin from your pancreas helps the sugar move. When you have diabetes, your pancreas makes too little insulin or none at all, or your body prevents the insulin it does make from working the way it should. The energy your cells need stays in your blood, and you have high blood sugar. The kinds of foods you eat and eating schedules help to regulate blood sugar levels.

- **Make meal plans.** People stick to healthier eating when they plan ahead for what they'll eat. We need carbohydrates for energy, but the best carbohydrates for regulating blood sugar come from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and low-fat dairy rather than sugary foods. Include protein in your meals
- **Balance your plate.** Fill at least half your plate with non-starchy vegetables and roughly a quarter with protein and a quarter with starch or grain.
- **Eat on a regular schedule.** Avoid wide swings in your blood sugar levels by not skipping meals. Keep snacks handy for when you feel like your blood sugar is dipping or if a meal is delayed.
- **Eat foods you enjoy.** You don't need to banish favorite foods completely, but you'll want to limit the portion size or how often you eat some foods because of how they affect blood sugar.
- **Learn to count carbs.** Your health care provider or registered dietitian will help you find the right number of carbohydrate grams you need for your daily meal plan. Then you can divide your carb count among your meals and snacks. Read labels, and learn the carb content of fresh foods. For example, fruit servings are different sizes, but each serving is 15 grams of carbs.
- **Make a standard grocery list.** What are the items you don't want to run out of so you can always put together a favorite meal that helps keep your blood sugar level in your target range?
- **Give yourself grace.** We all have setbacks. Just back on track with the next meal or the next day.

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