



# **DIABETES** and Healthy Eating

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## What can I eat?

This is a very common question for people diagnosed with diabetes. Developing a meal plan that also helps manage weight, cholesterol, and blood pressure can seem overwhelming. Taking steps to learn about your nutritional needs—while also learning how food can impact blood glucose control—will help you better manage diabetes and prevent complications.

### Become aware of your current diet and eating habits.

Consider keeping a 1-3 day food journal. Note what, when, and how much food you eat. Read nutrition labels on foods and beverages. Note the item's suggested serving size and total carbohydrate content. Notice sugar and fiber grams are listed below the total carbohydrate; these values are included in the total amount. For weight management note calories per serving; to lower LDL cholesterol, choose foods with low or no trans or saturated fat.

### Begin to learn where carbohydrates are found in food.

Carbohydrate is a necessary nutrient that supplies energy to body cells and tissues. People often recognize bread and potatoes as “carb foods,” but carbohydrates can be found in various foods, and most are healthy food choices.

### Learn how much carbohydrate you need.

Since carbohydrates are the most efficient source of energy for our bodies, most people need 40-50 percent of their calories to be in the form of carbohydrates. Generally, this is three to four servings of carbohydrate-rich food per meal, plus a serving or two as a snack. A serving size of carbohydrate is 15 grams.

**Fruit:** While the sugar in fruit is natural, it will affect your blood glucose. Fruits are a rich source of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Most people should aim to eat two servings a day. A fresh fruit serving is the size of a baseball, while a cooked or canned fruit serving is one-half cup.

**Milk/yogurt:** Many people are familiar with the term lactose, also known as milk sugar. Milk and yogurt both contain this natural sugar. A serving of milk is one 8-ounce cup, and a serving of yogurt is 6 ounces ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup). Both contain 12 grams of carbohydrate. Yogurt may have fruit and/or sweeteners added, which increases the carbohydrate content. Read labels carefully.

**Grains:** Whole grains such as corn, wheat and oats provide the carbohydrate found in bread, pasta and cereal. A serving of whole-grain bread is one slice (1 oz); hot cereal such as oatmeal is one-half cup; dry/cold cereal would be approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup, cooked rice or pasta is one-third cup. Most people need a minimum of 6 servings a day. An average sandwich would be 2 servings, a cup of pasta would provide 3 servings.

**Vegetables:** Generally speaking, vegetables can be broken down into two categories, “starchy” or “non-starchy.” Examples of starchy vegetables include potatoes, peas, legumes, and winter squash. A  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup portion would equal the carbohydrate content of a slice of bread or 15 grams of carbohydrate. Non-starchy vegetables are higher in water content than starchy

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/4 Cup (30g)	
Servings Per Container About 38	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 200	Calories from Fat 150
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 17g	<b>26%</b>
Saturated Fat 2.5g	<b>13%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 120mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 7g	<b>2%</b>
Dietary Fiber 2g	<b>8%</b>
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 4%	Iron 8%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

vegetables, and generally do not significantly impact blood glucose. A 1/2 cup portion of cooked vegetables such as carrots, greens, tomatoes or broccoli is low in calories and contains only 5 grams of carbohydrate. Add a generous portion of colorful vegetables to your meals. Choose raw, non-starchy vegetables for a healthy snack.

**Simple sugar:** Table sugar, honey and corn syrup are common ingredients in condiments, sweets and snacks. These sweeteners can be added to foods as a flavor enhancer or as a preservative. Simple sugars will impact your blood glucose levels.

### Determine protein and fat needs.

**Protein:** The main sources of protein are meat, fish, eggs and cheese. About 20 percent of our calorie needs should come from protein. Animal sources do not make a significant impact on blood glucose, but the choices should be low in fat— as animal fat can negatively affect cholesterol levels. Vegetable sources of protein include beans, peas and lentils.

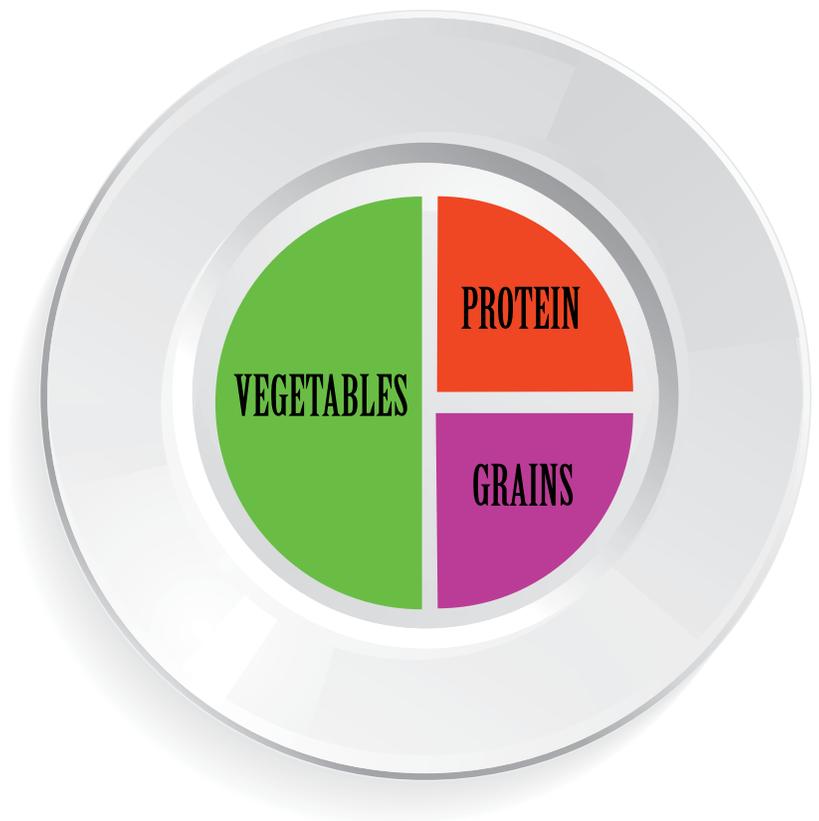
**Fat:** Fat is an essential nutrient for many body functions. Vegetable sources of fat such as olive oil, nuts, seeds and avocados can promote good cholesterol—while the saturated fat from animal sources should be limited. Generally, 30 percent of our calories should come from fat.

### Plan your healthy meals.

A balanced meal includes a source of lean protein with a variety of fruit, vegetables and whole grains, served with a healthy fat for a rich source of nutrients. Portion sizes will vary with calorie needs. The Plate Method is the simplest form of portion control. If half of your plate is filled with non-starchy vegetables such as salad, broccoli or carrots, the other two quarters of your plate remains for protein and starch. A serving of fruit, milk or yogurt can round out the meal.

### Monitor your blood glucose.

To learn how a food affects your blood glucose, consider testing before you eat and again two hours after the first bite. A rise in blood glucose of less than 40 points is desirable. Review the amount of carbohydrate eaten at the meal. If the change in blood glucose is significant, it may be necessary to reduce your portion size.



## Things you can do

- Schedule an appointment with a dietitian to learn more about portion control and carbohydrate counting.
- If you are trying to lose weight, contact a dietitian to help calculate your personal calorie needs based on your weight goal.
- Keep and review a food diary to assess variety and portion sizes.
- Read nutrition labels.
- Test your blood glucose levels before and two hours after a meal.

The more you understand how food affects blood glucose, and your health in general, the easier it is to make adjustments to your diet.

## Resources

- **www.gomeals.com** GoMeals is a web site and app that includes features for eating healthy, staying active and tracking blood glucose levels.
- **www.sparkpeople.com** Sparkpeople offers a calorie counter, meal plans, personalized fitness program, mobile apps and trackers
- **www.MyFitnessPal.com** tracks food and physical activity, mobile app available, large food database.
- **www.supertracker.usda.gov** Create a personalized nutrition and physical activity plan, track your foods and physical activities, offers tips and support to help you make healthier choices and plan ahead.



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[www.diabeteswellness.net](http://www.diabeteswellness.net) • [www.diabeteslocal.org](http://www.diabeteslocal.org)

Helpline Questions 1-800-941-4635 • Administrative offices 202-298-9211

### ***An Organization for People Who Live with Diabetes Every Day.***

The mission of **Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation** (DRWF) is to help find the cure for diabetes, and until that goal is achieved, to provide the care and self-management skills needed to combat the life-threatening complications of this terrible disease.

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