

Just *the* Basics

Diabetes is a condition in which your body cannot properly use and store food for energy. The fuel that your body needs is a kind of sugar called glucose. Glucose comes from foods, such as fruit, milk, some vegetables, grains, starches and sugar.

To control your blood glucose levels, eat in a healthy way and be active. You may also need to take medication and/or insulin.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING, DIABETES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Here are some tips to help you until you can see a registered dietitian.

TIPS

WHY

Eat small meals at regular times each day. Eat your meals no more than six hours apart. You may benefit from a healthy snack.

Eating at regular times helps your body control blood glucose levels.

Limit sugars and sweets, such as white or brown sugar, sugar cane, jam, honey, guava paste, fruit juice, nectar, aguapanela, chocolate drinks, dulce de leche, condensed milk, regular pop, desserts and candies.

When you eat a lot of sugar and sweet foods, your blood glucose increases. Artificial sweeteners can be used instead of sugar, in moderation.

Limit the amount of high-fat food you eat, such as fatty cuts of meats, fried foods, tamales, pupusas, arepas, tacos, empanadas, tostadas, salgadinhos, fried plantain, chicharrones, processed meat (chorizos, sausage and bologna), biscuits, chips and pastries.

You may gain weight if you eat high-fat foods. A healthy weight helps to control blood glucose and is healthier for your heart.

Eat high fibre foods, such as whole grain breads, tortillas and cereals, lentils, beans, brown rice, vegetables and fruits.

Foods high in fibre may help you feel full and may lower cholesterol and blood glucose levels.

Choose small portions of lower fat cheese, milk or yogurt as a snack or as part of a meal.

Low-fat dairy provides fewer calories but still contains protein and calcium for strong muscles, bones and teeth.

If you are thirsty, drink water.

Sweet drinks, such as regular pop, homemade fruit water and fruit juice, will raise your blood glucose levels.

Add physical activity to your day.

Regular physical activity improves your blood glucose control, cholesterol levels and blood pressure. It also helps to maintain a healthy body weight and to manage stress.

Plan *for* healthy eating



Photo: Michael Alberstat

- Eat small portions of grains and starchy foods, such as whole grain tortillas and breads, cereals, rice, yuca/cassava, corn, quinoa, potatoes, boiled or baked plantain, at every meal. Starchy foods give your body energy but too much can also raise your blood glucose levels.
- Eat more vegetables and green salads. These are very high in nutrients and low in calories.
- Enjoy fish, chicken, lean meats, low-fat cheese, eggs, beans, chickpeas or lentils as part of your meal.
- Include low-fat milk or plain yogurt and a piece of fruit to complete your meal.
- Alcohol can affect blood glucose levels and cause you to gain weight. Talk to your healthcare professional about whether you can include alcohol in your meal plan and how much is safe for you.

It's natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you include your favourite foods in a personalized meal plan.

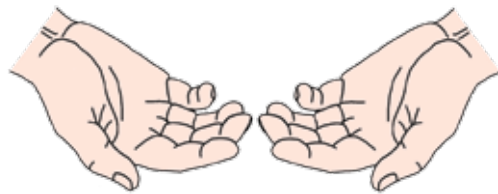
Handy portion guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



FRUITS*/GRAINS & STARCHES*:

Choose an amount the size of your fist for each of cooked grains, starches and fruit.



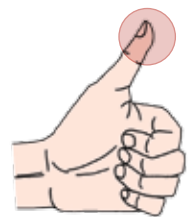
VEGETABLES*:

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands.



MEAT & ALTERNATIVES*:

Choose an amount up to the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



FATS*:

Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

MILK & ALTERNATIVES*: Drink 2 to 3 servings of low-fat milk each day (1 serving is 250 mL or 8 oz).

* Food group names taken from Beyond the Basics: Meal Planning for Healthy Eating, Diabetes Prevention and Management © Canadian Diabetes Association, 2005. Please refer to this resource for more details on meal planning.

Increase *your* physical activity

- Build time for physical activity into your daily routine.
- Be active most days of the week. Aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.
- Walk whenever you can.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the amount of effort; for example, progress from slow to fast walking.
- Make family time active; play your favourite sports (soccer, badminton, cycling, etc.) instead of watching TV or a movie.
- Try different activities; dance, learn a new sport, do mall walking, aerobics, practice yoga or try weightlifting with juice cans at home.
- You can be active all year long - indoors or outdoors.
- Visit your local community centre to check out indoor activities, especially during the winter months.
- Enjoy your improved sense of health and wellbeing.

- The Canadian Diabetes Association recommends that all people with diabetes should receive advice on nutrition from a registered dietitian.
- Good management of diabetes means healthy eating, staying active and taking medication as required.
- Be sure to eat breakfast. It provides a good start to the day.

Sample meal plan

FOR SMALLER APPETITES

Breakfast:

2 whole grain toast slices
 Low-fat cheese (1 oz, 30 g), less than 20 % M.F
 OR cottage cheese (¼ cup, 60 mL)
 1 orange
 1% or skim milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Lunch:

Chicken wrap
 - 1 whole grain tortilla (10", 25 cm)
 - baked chicken (2 oz, 60 g)
 - avocado (¼th, 34 g)
 - lettuce, tomato and cucumber
 - salsa (1 tbsp)
 15 grapes
 1 small carton of low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Tea or coffee (optional)

Dinner:

Vegetable and beef stew
 - lean beef (2 oz, 60 g)
 - corn (½ cup, 125 mL)
 - potatoes (½ cup, 125 mL)
 - onion, zucchini, peas and carrots
 Rice (⅔ cup, 150 mL)
 Water
 Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

Low-fat plain yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)
 OR
 1 small apple or ½ medium mango
 7 almonds



Follow a healthy lifestyle

- Have at least 3 out of the 4 key food groups from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* at each meal:
 - Vegetables and Fruit
 - Grain Products
 - Milk and Alternatives
 - Meat and Alternatives
- Have portion sizes that will help you reach or maintain a healthy body weight.
- Include high fibre foods, such as whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, fruits and legumes.
- Make lower fat choices (e.g. use skim milk, lean ground beef and trim fat on meat and chicken). Use only small amounts of oil and salad dressings.
- Have at least two servings of fish per week.
- Build healthy eating habits around a healthy lifestyle. Keep active and take time to manage stress every day.

Sample meal plan

FOR BIGGER APPETITES

Breakfast:

Hot cereal ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, 175 mL)
2 whole grain toast slices
1 scrambled egg with tomatoes, peppers and onions
1% or skim milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
Tea or coffee

Lunch:

Rice (1 cup, 250 mL)
Boiled beans ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, 125 mL)
Lean beef steak (3 oz, 90 g)
Stewed zucchini and carrots
Green salad

- lettuce, tomato wedges and cucumber slices
- dressing: lime juice and olive oil (1 tsp, 5 mL)

1 orange
Water
Tea or coffee

Afternoon Snack:

15 grapes
Cocoa with 1% or skim milk (1 cup, 250 mL)

Dinner:

1 large potato or 2 whole grain tortillas (6", 15 cm)
Baked fish (4 oz, 120 g)
Green beans
Green salad with low-fat salad dressing (1 tsp, 5 mL)
Pineapple (2 slices, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Low-fat plain yogurt ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, 175 mL)
Water
Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

Low-fat cheese (1 oz, 30 g), e.g. partially skim mozzarella cheese
4 whole grain crackers
1 small banana



Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. We are supported in our efforts by a community-based network of volunteers, employees, healthcare professionals, researchers and partners. By providing education and services, advocating on behalf of people with diabetes, supporting research and translating research into practical applications – we are delivering on our mission.

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