

Making healthy choices when you eat out



Eating away from home has become a part of many people's lifestyle. Even if we pack our own meals to eat at work, we often eat at restaurants, or buy food from take-out counters, grocery stores or get door delivery.

Making healthy choices when we eat foods that are prepared at home can help to manage diabetes.

Getting the right balance and portion size

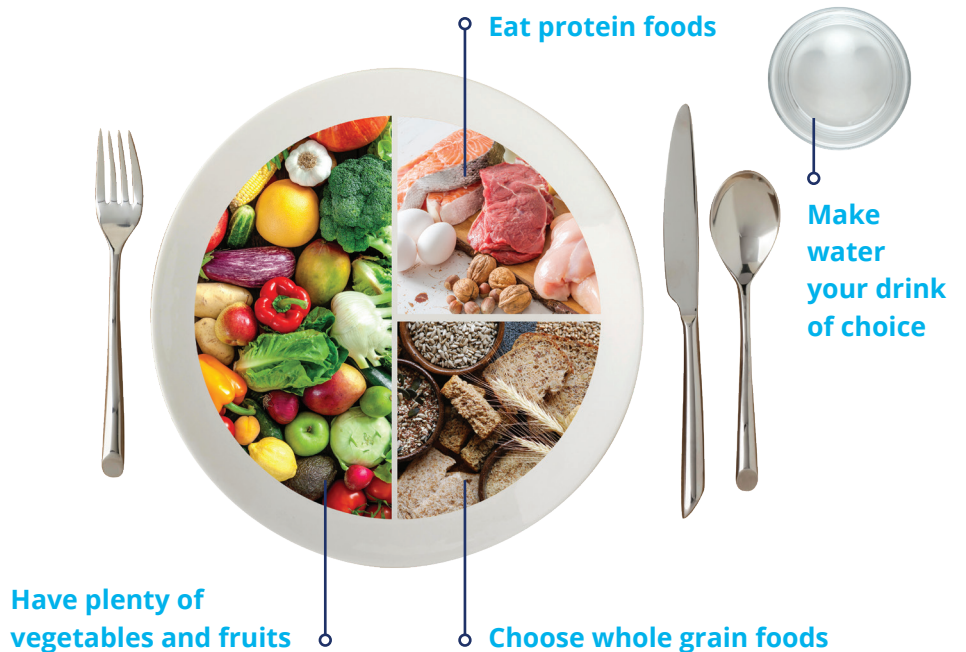
Canada's Food Guide contains three major food groups:

- Vegetables and fruits
- Whole grain products
- Protein foods

Choosing foods from all the food groups ensures that your body gets all the nutrients it needs.

The *Plate Method* below can help you manage portions and get the right balance when you plan your meals.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day



Check your portion sizes

Foods eaten away from home are often served in portions that are too large. In addition to the Plate Method, the *Handy Portion Guide* also helps to keep your portion sizes in check.

To keep your blood glucose levels stable while eating away from home you may need to adjust the portion size, your insulin dose (if you use insulin), or your physical activity. If the serving size is larger or smaller than your usual portion or if the meal is delayed, your blood glucose level will be affected. In a restaurant, you can ask for your leftovers to be packed, share your entrée with someone else, or request for half portions.

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 grains or starches, or fruit.



Vegetables

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose brightly coloured vegetables.



Protein Foods

Choose an amount 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.

Packing meals to take with you

When possible, packing meals to take with you can be a great option as you have full control and knowledge as to what your meal consists of and can cater to your nutritional and preferences best. Bring healthy food from home with you, such as a lunch container filled with brown rice (about the size of your fist), palm size of lean meat, chicken, or fish, and plenty of cooked or raw vegetables. For snacks pack, nuts, fruits, edamame, and washed, pre-cut vegetables.



Watching your carbohydrates while away from home

Foods that contain carbohydrates raise your *blood glucose*. To manage diabetes, you need to know which foods contain carbohydrates and how much carbohydrate is in your meal or snack. This is also important to watch when you are away from home. If you are on insulin, speak to your healthcare team about planning your meals and insulin adjustments.



General guidelines on carbohydrate choices

The amount of carbohydrate you should eat is based on your individual needs; talk to the dietitian on your health care team to see what amount is right for you. Below is a general guideline:

Carbohydrate Amount	Women	Men
In a meal	45 to 60 grams	60 to 75 grams
In a snack	15 to 30 grams	15 to 30 grams

What should my blood glucose be before and after meals?

Know your target and take your glucose meter with you when you are eating away from home. This way you will know whether the amount of carbohydrate you consume is too little, just enough, or too much. This will help you to plan for future meals. Start by checking your blood glucose before you eat and again 2 hours after the meal.

Blood glucose target for most people:

Before meals	4 to 7 mmol/L
2 hours after the start of the meal	5 to 10 mmol/L

If your blood glucose is too high after meals, ask yourself:

- Did I include some protein and fat?
(including protein and fats helps keep blood glucose from going too high)
- Did I eat too many carbohydrates?
(carbohydrates are foods that raise your blood glucose the most)
- Did I get enough exercise?
(exercise can help keep your blood glucose in target)
- Should I talk to my healthcare team about changing my medications?

Try to eat on time

Your meals should be spaced 4 to 6 hours apart. If your meal will be earlier or later than usual, you may need to adjust your insulin (if you use insulin) or change the timing of a snack. This will avoid having a high or low blood glucose level. If you know you will be eating away from home, don't skip meals or snacks if they are part of your meal plan. Skipping meals may cause you to overeat when you get to the restaurant or event.

Planning your menu away from home

Many restaurants have put their menus and nutrition information online. That means you can plan in advance what you will order and check how much carbohydrate you are getting.

To get you get started, look at these sample menus for a person spending one full day away from home. Then, use the *blank planning charts* to create your own menu.

BREAKFAST**Location: Self-packed breakfast to eat at work** **Time: 8 a.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Whole wheat bread, 2 pieces	30
Peanut butter (2 tbsp, 30 mL)	0
Fortified soy beverage (1 cup, 250 mL) Original flavour	11
1 Medium orange	15
Tea or coffee, black	0
Total	56 grams

LUNCH**Location: XYZ Restaurant****Time: 12 noon**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Rice vermicelli (1 cup, 250 mL)	45
Lean meat (2 oz, 60 g)	0
Choy sum (1 cup, 250 mL)	0
1 Medium fruit or 1/2 cup cut-up mixed fruit	15
Total	60 grams

AFTERNOON SNACK**Location: At work****Time: 3 p.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Low-fat plain yogurt (3/4 cup, 175 mL)	15
Blueberries (1/2 cup, 125 mL)	9
Total	24 grams

DINNER**Location: At WXY Restaurant****Time: 6 p.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Wintermelon soup (2 cups, 500 mL)	0
Rice, cooked measure (2/3 cup, 150 mL)	30
Stir-fry broccoli with beef (1 oz, 30 g beef)	0
Steamed fish with ginger and green onion (4 oz, 120 g fish)	0
1 Medium fruit or 1/2 cup cut-up mixed fruit	15
1 Hot tea, black	0
Total	45 grams

6 Tips for healthier restaurant eating

1 Make special requests

- Ask to have your meal prepared differently. For example, ask for baked instead of fried. You can also request no sugar or fat be added to your ordered items.
- Ask for extra vegetables instead of French fries.
- Decide for yourself the amount of fat you eat by asking for salad dressings, toppings, and sauces on the side.
- Choose a smaller portion. We often eat what is in front of us, ignoring when our stomach is full. This can lead us to eating too much, and result in high blood glucose readings after meals.
- At Western style restaurants, try a salad or broth soup as a starter, resist the bread and butter given at the beginning of a meal.

Depending on the variation among recipes, some main dishes may be higher or lower in fat content. It is best to check with the server if you want to be sure.

2 Make substitutions

AT CHINESE RESTAURANTS:	
Instead of having...	Substitute with...
At Dim Sum Restaurants:	
Spring rolls, deep fried taro pastry with meat filling, deep fried sesame balls, rice sheet rolls, turnip cake, BBQ pork pastry, deep fried wonton, baked egg tart, sweet cakes, sticky rice wrap, marinated chicken feet, pot stickers	Shrimp dumpling, pork dumpling (siu mai), steamed chicken wrap, blanched vegetables, chew-chow rice dumplings with vegetable filling, steamed beef balls
At Wonton Noodle Houses:	
Fried noodles (e.g. chow mein, chow fun), deep fried Chinese donut (You-Tiao), pan fried or deep fried green onion pancakes, steamed leaf wrapped with sticky rice (Zong-Zi), fried rice.	Blanched or stir-fried vegetables, meat, or fish congee, lean meat with noodles or rice vermicelli in soup, wonton soup, stir-fried meat with vegetables on plain rice
For desserts:	
Dessert soups, mango pudding, baked sago coconut pudding, coconut glutinous rice balls, Chinese Rice Krispies (Ma-Chai)	Fresh fruit

AT WESTERN STYLE RESTAURANTS:

Instead of having...	Substitute with...
French fries, hash browns, fried rice	Whole grain breads, rice, pasta, barley, couscous, plain or sweet potatoes
High-fat dressings such as sour cream	Salsa
Creamy salad dressings or toppings such as bacon bits, croutons and cheese	A low-fat dressing such as a vinaigrette or lemon juice
Cream soups	Broth based or vegetable soups
High-salt, high-fat meats like pork ribs, chicken wings, sausages, wieners, and processed luncheon meats	Lean meats, poultry without the skin, fish, eggs, low-fat cheese, tofu, soy products, legumes (such as lentils, chickpeas, beans)
Sauces with high sodium (salt) content, such as soy sauce, gravy and ketchup	Low-sodium options. Or, have the sauce served on the side so that you control how much of it you eat
High-fat desserts	Fruit, yogurt, latte or cappuccino with skim milk

3 Check the cooking method

- Look for healthier cooking methods on the menu: baked, steamed, poached, roasted, or stir-fried.
- Be aware that salty sauces used in stir-fries such as soy sauce, oyster sauce, hoisin sauces can be high in sodium and contributes to high blood pressure. One tablespoon (15 mL) of soy sauce adds over 900 mg of sodium, that's a lot!
- Look for dishes with tomato-based rather than cream-based sauces.
- If a menu item is unfamiliar to you, ask your server about its ingredients and method of cooking.

4 Choose healthier beverages

- Ask for water, low-fat milk, sugar-free or diet drinks, clear tea, or beverages such as herbal tea or black coffee without added sugar, honey or syrups.
- Too much alcohol with a meal can make your blood glucose levels either too high or too low. Talk to your healthcare team about whether it is safe to drink alcohol, and how much.

5 Make conscious choices at the buffet

- Walk around the buffet table and see what foods are offered. Note which foods appeal to you and which ones you can do without.
- Go through the buffet line only once for each course. If the buffet is too much temptation, order from the menu instead, if that is an option.
- Use the *Plate Method* to guide you.
- If you like variety, take small amounts of each food you choose. Or, eat the amount you would eat at a regular restaurant. Have one appetizer, such as a salad, one main course, and look for a healthy dessert option.

6 Pace yourself

- Take your time to savour every bite and take pleasure in the meal experience.
- Stop when you feel full and satisfied. Your brain takes about 20 minutes to realize that your stomach is full.
- Drink water to help avoid overeating.

BREAKFAST

Location:

Time:

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Total	

MORNING SNACK

Location:

Time:

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total	
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LUNCH

Location: _____ **Time:** _____

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total	
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AFTERNOON SNACK

Location: _____ **Time:** _____

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total	
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DINNER

Location: _____ **Time:** _____

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total	
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EVENING SNACK

Location: _____ **Time:** _____

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total	
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Glossary

Blood glucose

Blood glucose is the amount of glucose (sugar) present in the blood.

Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate is one of the three main nutrients found in food. Starches, fruit, milk products, and some vegetables have carbohydrates. Your body needs carbohydrates for energy. Your body breaks them down into a sugar called glucose.

**DIABETES
CANADA**

diabetes.ca | 1-800 BANTING (226-8464) | info@diabetes.ca

Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Close to 11.5 million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and, funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

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