

DIABETES CANADA

Eating *for* Wellness

HELPING YOU MANAGE DIABETES, ONE
NUTRITIOUS PLATE AT A TIME.



DIABETES
CANADA

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Introduction to your **Eating for Wellness** guide

Eating well is foundational to good health. For the 1 in 3 Canadians who live with diabetes or prediabetes, it's also critical to blood sugar management. Unfortunately, with so much information out there, it can be difficult to know which nutrition sources to trust. That's why Diabetes Canada has put together this helpful *Eating for Wellness* guide.

This book will help you...



Learn how to prepare healthier food options. We've got lots of simple, delicious recipes to share!



Better understand diabetes and its management. We'll explain why nutrition matters so much for your overall health.



Quickly find the tools and tips you need. This is your one-stop reference for healthy eating!



Diabetes Canada is here to support you. We've been committed to improving the quality of life of people living with diabetes for nearly 70 years. Today, we're the nation's most trusted provider of diabetes education, research, resources, and services – and now we've compiled healthy eating information and tips in one quick-access guide.

This easy-to-understand, evidence-based resource can support you to live your healthiest life...and offers fun new meal and snack ideas to try out in the kitchen!

Why nutrition matters for diabetes management

Various media often depict disease and people with diabetes in an inaccurate and harmful light. Despite popular belief, diabetes is not caused by eating too much sugar and people don't "give themselves" diabetes. Your likelihood of developing diabetes depends on your genes, family history, ethnic background, and other factors like the environment and your health. Causes also vary by type of diabetes.

Type 1 Diabetes

An autoimmune disease where your immune system destroys cells in your pancreas, leaving your body without insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes

The result of not enough insulin being made in the pancreas, and/or the body being unable to use the insulin it makes.

Prediabetes

When your blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes.

Gestational Diabetes

Occurs during pregnancy when the pancreas can't produce enough insulin due to the hormone changes associated with pregnancy.

All types of diabetes occur when your body has difficulty regulating the amount of sugar in your blood.

What does every type of diabetes have in common?

Management strategies can differ significantly from person to person. But while types of treatments can vary, the importance of **eating well** is shared by all people living with diabetes.



Planning for wellness

The key to success with healthy eating is having a plan. Diabetes Canada has put together this 7-day meal plan to help you achieve balance throughout your week. We hope it will inspire you as you move forward on your own wellness journey. Consider trying some of these recipes to diversify your meals!

7-DAY HEALTHY MEAL PLAN

Day 1

Breakfast: 1 [apricot oat muffin](#)

Lunch: 2 cups [red lentil soup](#), green salad, 1 tbsp light salad dressing

Dinner: 1 serving [skillet chicken breast](#), roasted sweet potatoes (*make extra for tomorrow's lunch*)

Day 2

Breakfast: 1-egg omelette with vegetables, 2 slices whole-grain toast, 2 tbsp soft margarine, 1/2 cup low-fat milk

Lunch: 1 serving [roasted cauliflower salad](#), 3-4 oz. grilled or baked pork loin chop, 1 cup mashed potato

Dinner: 1 serving [Spinach Mushroom Barley Pilaf](#), 3-4 oz. grilled or baked chicken

Day 3

Breakfast: 1 serving [tofu frittata](#), 3/4 cup leftover roasted sweet potatoes

Lunch: 3 oz. roast chicken, 2 slices whole-grain bread, 2 tsp mayonnaise, mustard, lettuce, tomato if desired, 1 fruit

Dinner: 1 serving [white fish](#), green salad, 1 tbsp light salad dressing, 1/4 cup cooked couscous

Day 4

Breakfast: 2 slices whole-grain toast, 1 egg, poached or sunnyside up, 1/4 avocado, mashed, salt and pepper to taste

Lunch: 1 serving [Mexican baked eggs on black beans](#), 1 slice whole-grain bread, 2 tsp soft margarine, 1/2 cup low-fat yogurt

Dinner: 1 cup cooked pasta, 1/2 cup favourite pasta sauce, 3-4 oz. grilled or baked chicken

Day 5

Breakfast: 1/3 cup steel-cut rolled oats, 1 tbsp peanut butter added to cooked oats, 1/2 cup low-fat milk

Lunch: 3 oz. tuna packed in water, drained, 1 whole-wheat pita, 2 tsp mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato, 1 fruit

Dinner: 1 serving [oven roasted salmon](#), 3/4 cup mashed sweet potato, broccoli, steamed or roasted

Day 6

Breakfast: 1-egg omelette with vegetables, 2 slices whole-grain toast, 2 tbsp soft margarine, 1/2 cup low-fat milk

Lunch: 1 serving [buddha bowl](#), 1 fruit

Dinner: 1 cup [spinach pilaf](#), 3-4 oz. grilled or baked chicken

Day 7

Breakfast: 1/3 cup steel-cut rolled oats, 1 tbsp peanut butter added to cooked oats, 1/2 cup low-fat milk

Lunch: Green salad, 3 oz. grilled chicken breast and 1/4 cup croutons, 1 tbsp light salad dressing, 1/4 cup low-fat yogurt, 1 fruit

Dinner: 1 serving [chicken and white bean stew](#), 2 oz. whole grain bread or roll

Apricot Oat Muffins

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 large egg (or 2 egg whites)
- 1/4 cup soft tub margarine or canola oil
- 1/2 cup lightly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- 1/2 tsp almond or pure vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup finely chopped dried apricots
- 12 whole almonds

 COOK TIME: 35 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 160

 SERVING SIZE: 12

 CARBS: 25 g



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F/ 200°C.
2. Line compartments of a muffin pan with paper liners (or spray with cooking spray). In a food processor fitted with the steel blade, combine flours, oats, baking powder, and baking soda; process for 5 seconds.
3. Add egg, margarine, brown sugar, yogurt, and almond extract; process for 25 to 30 seconds or until smooth and blended. Stir in apricots with a rubber spatula.
4. Scoop batter into prepared muffin pan, filling each compartment about two-thirds full.
5. Top each muffin with 1 almond.
6. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until tops are golden brown and spring back when lightly touched.



Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: People with diabetes can't eat sugar.

Fact: You can enjoy sugar and sweeteners in moderation.

Farm-Fresh Tofu Frittata

Ingredients

- 1 **tblsp** canola oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 **cup** red onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 **cup** broccoli, finely chopped
- 1/2 **cup** mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1/2 **tsp** pepper
- 1/4 **tsp** salt
- 8 eggs
- 1/2 **cup** firm tofu, finely chopped
- 1 **cup** cooked whole grain (e.g. barley, brown rice, or quinoa)
- 1/2 **cup** cherry tomatoes, finely sliced
- 1/3 **cup** low-fat cheddar cheese, shredded
- Chopped fresh parsley or chives (optional, for garnish)




Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: Meat is the only way to get protein.

Fact: There are many great plant-based proteins out there! Tofu is one example. It is also a good source of iron and calcium.

 **COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES**

 **CALORIES: 300**

 **SERVING SIZE: 4**

 **CARBS: 18 g**



Directions

1. Spray a 9-inch (23 cm) pie plate or 8-inch (2 L) square metal cake pan; set aside.
2. In a non-stick skillet, heat canola oil over medium heat; cook garlic, onion, peppers, broccoli, mushrooms, pepper and salt for 5 minutes or until softened.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs; stir in cooked vegetables, tofu, and grain.
4. Pour into prepared pie plate; sprinkle with tomatoes and cheese.
5. Bake in 350°F (180°C) oven until golden and set, about 20 minutes.
6. Remove from oven; sprinkle cheese and place back into oven for an additional 5 minutes (or until cheese melts).
7. Remove from oven and let cool slightly before serving. Garnish with chopped parsley or chives.

Mexican baked eggs on black beans

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 3/4 cup minced onion
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
(or to taste)
- 1 can (19oz) low sodium black beans,
rinsed and drained
- 1 can (19oz) low sodium diced tomatoes
- 6 eggs
- 1/4 cup grated Cheddar cheese



Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: *The saturated fat in eggs dramatically raises cholesterol levels in the body.*

Fact: *Eggs are a good source of protein and contain many important nutrients. The cholesterol in eggs doesn't significantly contribute to blood cholesterol levels.*

 COOK TIME: 55 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 190

 SERVING SIZE: 6

 CARBS: 19 g



Directions

1. In large saucepan, heat canola oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for about 5 minutes. Add chili powder, cumin and red pepper flakes and stir for 2 minutes. If you like it extra spicy, add more red pepper flakes to taste.
2. Add black beans and tomatoes. Stir. Bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 15 – 30 minutes until thickened to desired texture. While mixture cooks, preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
3. Lightly brush 6 ramekins (placed on a baking sheet) or one 2 quart (2.25 L) casserole dish with canola oil or cooking oil spray. Mash bean mixture well and evenly divide amongst the dishes. Make a shallow hole in the middle of each one.
4. Carefully crack one egg on top of each dish. Sprinkle lightly with cheese. Bake for 15 minutes or until egg is cooked to desired doneness.

Red Lentil Soup

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp** canola oil
- 1** medium onion, diced
- 2** stalks celery, diced
- 2** carrots, diced
- 1 tsp** cumin
- 2** cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ tsp** ground turmeric
- 4 cups** vegetable broth
- 2 cups** water
- 1 1/2 cups** red lentils, rinsed, drained
- 3** sprigs fresh thyme leaves
- 2** bay leaves
- Juice of **1** lemon
- 1/4 cup** crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup** chopped fresh Italian parsley




Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: *Soup is just for lunch.*

Fact: *Soup, especially with the addition of fibre-rich legumes, like lentils, provides a satisfying meal loaded with vitamins and minerals, and can be eaten at any time of the day!*

 **COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES**

 **CALORIES: 270**

 **SERVING SIZE: 6**

 **CARBS: 37 g**



Directions

- 1.** In large pot heat oil over medium heat. Add carrots, onion, and celery; cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in garlic, cumin and turmeric; cook for 1 minute, stirring, until fragrant.
- 2.** Add broth, water, bay leaves thyme and lentils. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until lentils are very tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Remove bay leaves.
- 3.** Remove from heat and purée half of the soup using either a blender or immersion blender.
- 4.** Add back in the puréed half of the soup. Stir in lemon juice. Ladle soup into bowls and top with feta cheese and parsley.

Garden Veggie Buddha Bowl with lentils and tahini sauce

Ingredients

TAHINI DRESSING

3 tbsp tahini (sesame paste)

3 tbsp rice vinegar

3 tbsp canola oil

1 tsp grated ginger

1 garlic clove, minced

3 tbsp boiling water

Salt and pepper

BOWL BASE

2 cups (500 mL) cooked brown rice

1 cup cooked black (Beluga) or green lentils

3 tbsp chopped dill

Salt and pepper


2 cups thinly sliced baby spinach

1 cup thinly sliced red peppers

1 cup grated carrots

1 cup enoki (long thin white mushrooms)
or sliced mushrooms

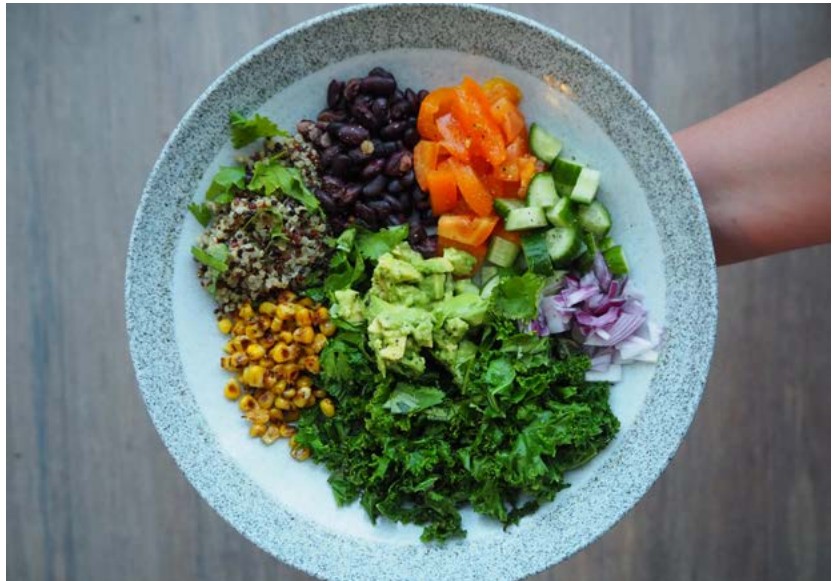
1/2 cup pumpkin seeds

 COOK TIME: **15 MINUTES**

 CALORIES: **340**

 SERVING SIZE: **6**

 CARBS: **35 g**



Directions

1. Tahini Dressing:

- Whisk together tahini, vinegar, oil, ginger, and garlic until smooth.
- Add boiling water to thin out. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Set aside.

2. Bowl base:

- Toss hot rice and lentils with dill in a bowl.
- Season with salt and pepper to taste.

3. Divide equally among serving bowls.

4. Divide spinach, red peppers, carrots, mushrooms, and pumpkin seeds on top of lentil blend in bowls.

5. Drizzle dressing on top of veggies and serve immediately.



Visit the Diabetes
Canada website to
[bookmark this recipe!](#)

Roasted Cauliflower Salad

Ingredients

- 2 **tbsp** canola oil
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into bite-sized florets
- 1/2 **tsp** pepper

DRESSING

- 1/2 **cup** plain 0% M.F. Greek yogurt
- 1 **tbsp** Dijon mustard
- 1 **tbsp** liquid honey
- 1 **tbsp** canola oil
- 2 **tbsp** fresh dill, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 **tbsp** lemon juice
- 1/2 small red onion, diced
- 3 stalks of celery, diced
- 2 eggs, hardboiled and chopped




Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: Vegetables are high in carbohydrates and may spike blood sugar levels in the body.

Fact: Vegetables are beneficial to health because they are high in vitamins, minerals and fibre. Most vegetables are low in carbohydrates and won't cause a big rise in blood sugar.

 COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 190

 SERVING SIZE: 5

 CARBS: 17 g



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a bowl, toss together cauliflower, canola oil, and pepper.
3. On a non-stick baking sheet, spread cauliflower in a single layer. Bake for 25 minutes, tossing once, until lightly browned and crispy; let cool.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together yogurt, mustard, honey, canola oil, dill, garlic, and lemon juice. Stir in red onion, celery, and eggs. Add cauliflower; gently toss to coat well. Serve chilled.

White fish with roast garlic & lentil mash

Ingredients

ROASTED GARLIC

- 2 heads of garlic
- 1 **tblsp** canola oil
- 1 **tblsp** chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 **tsp** fresh ground pepper

LENTIL MASH

- canola oil cooking spray
- 2 **cups** cooked or canned, rinsed and drained, green lentils
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 **tsp** chopped fresh thyme
- 1/2 **cup** reduced-sodium vegetable broth

FISH

- 4 white fish fillets (about 1 lb/500 g)
- canola oil cooking spray
- 1/2 **tsp** curry powder
- 1 **tblsp** chopped fresh parsley

 COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 560

 SERVING SIZE: 4

 CARBS: 28 g



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 °F (200 °C).
2. Cut stem off garlic heads to expose cloves. Wrap with foil and roast for about 1 hour until very soft. Let cool slightly. Squeeze out garlic cloves from each head and mash in canola oil with fork. Stir in parsley and pepper; set aside.
3. To prepare lentil mash: spray nonstick skillet with canola oil cooking spray and over medium heat, add lentils, tomatoes, garlic and thyme. Cook for 5 minutes; mash slightly. Stir in broth and keep warm.
4. Spray fish fillets with canola oil cooking spray and sprinkle with curry powder and parsley. Preheat oven to 350 °F (180 °C).
5. In nonstick, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat, sear fish on both sides. Spread roasted garlic mixture on top of fillets and place in oven for about 5 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested.
5. Spoon lentil mixture into shallow bowl and top with fish fillets.




Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Oven-Roasted Salmon with Sriracha and Lime

Ingredients

- 2 **tblsp** canola oil
- 1 **tblsp** soy sauce
- 1/4 **cup** Sriracha sauce
- 1 **tblsp** honey
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 **lb.** salmon, cut into 4 fillets

 COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 290

 SERVING SIZE: 4

 CARBS: 9 g



Directions

1. In a small bowl, combine canola oil, soy sauce, Sriracha, honey and lime juice; brush over top of fillets.
2. Place fillets, skin side down on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
3. Bake salmon at 450°F (230°C) for 10 to 15 minutes or until fish is opaque and flakes easily when tested with fork.



Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: Salmon is high in saturated fat and may lead to high cholesterol levels.

Fact: This lean protein is high in omega-3 fatty acids that may help to lower blood cholesterol.

Skillet Chicken Breasts with Tomatoes and Olives

Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 tbsp chicken stock or water
- 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1/2 cup pitted kalamata olives
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 3-4 sprigs of fresh rosemary and/or thyme
- Lemon wedges, for garnish



Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: Chicken is high in fat.

Fact: Removing the skin, trimming any visible fat and choosing lean cuts can help reduce the amount of saturated fat from poultry in your diet.

 COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 430

 SERVING SIZE: 4

 CARBS: 17 g



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
Pat the chicken breasts dry with paper towel, and season on both sides with pepper.
2. Warm the canola oil in a 12-inch (30 cm) oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Sear the chicken for about 5 minutes per side. The chicken will release easily from the pan when it's ready to be flipped. Remove the chicken from the skillet and keep warm on a plate.
3. Stir the sliced onion and garlic into the pan. If the pan is too dry, add another teaspoon (5 mL) of canola oil. Stir for a few minutes, until fragrant. Add the chicken stock or water and scrape the brown bits off the bottom of the pan. Stir in the salt and pepper.
4. Stir in the canned tomatoes, red pepper, and olives. Nestle in the chicken breasts. Top with the cherry tomatoes and tuck in the sprigs of herbs. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until a meat thermometer registers 165°F (74°C) in the thickest part of the breast.
5. Remove the skillet from the oven, letting the chicken rest for a few minutes. Serve the chicken and sauce over whole-grain pasta, brown rice, quinoa, or couscous. Garnish with lemon wedges.

Spinach & mushroom barley pilaf

Ingredients

- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup quick-cooking barley
- 1 1/2 tbsp canola oil, divided
- 1 1/2 cups diced onions
- 1/2 package mushrooms, sliced
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups loosely packed baby spinach
- 1 tsp dried oregano leaves, crumbled
- 1/2 tsp (3 mL) salt

 COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 150

 SERVING SIZE: 4

 CARBS: 24 g



Directions

1. Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan over high heat. Stir in barley, reduce heat, cover tightly, and simmer 10-12 minutes or until tender. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat 1/2 tablespoon (7.5 mL) canola oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Tilt skillet to coat bottom evenly; add onions, and cook 6 minutes or until richly browned, stirring frequently. Add mushrooms and cook 4 minutes or until tender, using two utensils to toss. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds, stirring constantly.
3. Remove from heat. Add spinach, oregano, salt, and undrained barley. Toss well to blend. Drizzle remaining 1 tablespoon (15 mL) canola oil evenly over all and toss gently until just coated.



Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: *Since barley is a carbohydrate, it will raise your blood sugar levels.*

Fact: *Barley is a carbohydrate-containing food, but is high in soluble fibre that can help lower blood cholesterol levels and slow the release of sugar into the blood.*

Chicken and white bean stew

Ingredients

- 2 **tblsp** canola oil
- 1 **lb.** boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch (5 cm) pieces
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 **cup** carrots, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 **pkg.** sliced cremini mushrooms
- 1 **tblsp** chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 4 **cups** low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 **can** cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 **tblsp** each cold water and cornstarch
- 4 **cups** chopped kale
- 1/4 **cup** grated Parmesan cheese




Visit the Diabetes Canada website to [bookmark this recipe!](#)

Busting Diabetes Myths

Myth: Beans and legumes are lower in protein than meat.

Fact: Legumes like white beans are a good source of fibre and are high in protein.

 COOK TIME: 35 MINUTES

 CALORIES: 280

 SERVING SIZE: 6

 CARBS: 24 g



Directions

1. In Dutch oven or large heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add chicken; cook, stirring until browned, about 4 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer mixture to plate; set aside.
2. Add onion and carrots; cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, mushrooms, thyme and 2 **tblsp** (30 mL) water; cook, stirring occasionally until mushrooms are tender and no liquid remains, about 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Add chicken mixture to Dutch oven. Stir in beans and broth; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for about 20 minutes.
4. In small bowl stir together water and cornstarch; stir into Dutch oven; add kale. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until thickened, stirring constantly until kale is tender-crisp, or for about 3 to 5 minutes. Garnish with Parmesan cheese.

How to Pack a Healthy Snack

Incorporating healthy snacks into your day can help you feel fuller between meals and prevent overeating. For people who take insulin or blood sugar-lowering medications, snacks can help prevent low blood sugar. But they may not need to be included in all meal plans. Talk to your dietitian to find out if snacks would be beneficial to your diabetes management. If you are going to snack, aim for healthy options like these!



1 medium-sized apple or orange

Foods like fruits that are high in fibre may help you feel fuller.



1 cup (250 mL) cantaloupe or blueberries

Fruits like these, which are lower on the Glycemic Index, should be chosen more often.



½ cup (125 mL) low-fat yogurt with ½ cup (125 mL) strawberries

It's important to regularly incorporate sources of protein like yogurt into your diet.



3 cups (750 mL) plain popped popcorn

Popcorn is low in both calories and sugar, making it a great snack option.



1 slice whole grain bread with peanut butter

The protein in the peanut butter helps slow the release of the sugar (carbohydrate) from the bread and makes this a well-balanced snack.



5-6 whole grain crackers with 2 tbsp (30 mL) hummus

When it's snack time, including sources of protein (e.g., legumes like chickpeas) and fibre (e.g., whole grains) helps to make you feel satisfied.

Each of these options provides approximately 15g carbohydrate and 100–150 calories.

Staying on track while eating out

Whether at restaurants, takeout counters, vending machines or corner stores, making healthy choices is absolutely possible. Here's some helpful suggestions and information so you can enjoy healthy foods and meals wherever you are!

Plan for success by planning ahead

It's important to avoid skipping meals or snacks, which can cause you to make less healthy food choices out of hunger and impact your blood glucose levels. Try to bring healthy food from home such as sandwiches, nuts, or washed and pre-cut vegetables and fruit when you are out and about. Drink water throughout the day and focus on trying new healthy foods at home to find ones you enjoy. Remember, change happens one small step at a time!

Tips for eating in restaurants



It's important to avoid skipping meals or snacks, which can cause you to make less healthy food choices out of hunger and impact your blood glucose levels. Try to bring healthy food from home such as sandwiches, nuts, or washed and pre-cut vegetables and fruit. Drink water to avoid nibbling throughout the day, and focus on trying new healthy foods at home to find ones you enjoy. Remember, change happens one small step at a time!

1. **Check out all options** on the menu before making your choice.
2. **Order half portions** or share an item with a friend.
3. When portion sizes are big, ask for a **take-out container** and put half your meal in the container right away when it arrives to enjoy another day.
4. **Consider substitutions** such as salad vs. fries or milk vs. cream.
5. Request your food be **prepared differently** (e.g. baked vs. fried).
6. Order your **sauces on the side** and use them sparingly.

Alcohol and your health

As a general rule, there is no need to avoid alcohol solely because you have diabetes. Alcohol should always be enjoyed in moderation, and there are some unique considerations when it comes to managing your diabetes before, during, and after drinking.

Diabetes management and alcohol

Before you drink

1. Eat regular meals, take your medication(s), and **check your blood sugar** levels frequently.
2. Always have a **treatment for low blood sugar** with you.
3. Wherever you are, make sure someone with you knows your signs and symptoms of low blood sugar and **how to treat it so they can help you.**
4. Be aware that glucagon, a treatment for low blood sugar, **will not work** while alcohol is in the body. Make sure someone knows to call an ambulance if you pass out.
5. **Wear diabetes identification** such as a MedicAlert® bracelet.

While drinking

1. **Eat carbohydrate-rich foods**, especially if you are dancing or doing another physical activity.
2. Always pour your own drinks. Use less alcohol and stretch your drinks with **sugar-free mixes.**
3. **Drink slowly.** Make your second drink without alcohol.

After drinking

1. **Tell a responsible person** that you have been drinking. They should look for low blood sugar symptoms.
2. **Check your blood sugar** before going to bed. Eat a carbohydrate snack if your blood sugar is lower than usual.
3. **Set an alarm** or have a responsible person wake you up through the night and early morning – a delayed low blood sugar can occur anytime up to 24 hours after drinking alcohol.
4. Make sure to **continue to take the food, medication or insulin** you normally take. Missed medication or insulin can lead to high blood sugar, ketones and diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA).

Eating well across every culture

Each person with diabetes is different, and there is no single approach to healthy eating that suits everyone. Around the world, people with diabetes eat a variety of delicious cultural foods to successfully manage their diabetes.

Whatever healthy eating approach you follow, you should choose foods that help you to:

- manage your **blood sugar**
- manage your **weight**
- manage your **blood pressure**
- manage your **cholesterol**

Meal planning goes international

Diabetes Canada has a variety of culturally relevant healthy eating guides to support you in managing your diabetes. Each contains its own balanced and tasty 7-day meal plan.



African and Caribbean

This resource is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

Chinese

This resource is available in [English](#), [Simplified HR](#), and [Traditional HR](#).

South Asian

This resource is available in [English](#), [Hindi](#), [Punjabi](#), [Tamil](#), and [Urdu](#).

Multicultural Webinar Series

Diabetes Canada has a webinar series providing actionable, detailed information on eating well and dining out specifically for those of South Asian, Chinese, and African & Caribbean heritage.

[Click here to view the series.](#)

Tools and Resources for managing your diabetes

It can be overwhelming to keep track of everything you need to know about managing diabetes. That's why Diabetes Canada has condensed some of the most important nutrition information on the following pages for your reference. Consult these tools any time you have questions about eating, whether you're at home or out on the town.



The importance of portions



Simple tips for healthy eating



Counting carbohydrates 101



Your Glycemic Index food guide



The importance of portions

Knowing what to eat and how much to eat will help you manage your blood sugar levels. Both your hands and your plate can be useful portion control guides.

Handy portion guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating the right amount of food to eat. When you are 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.



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



Protein Foods
Choose an amount the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



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

Fruits/Grains & Starches

Examples: Orange, apple, potatoes, brown rice, spaghetti

Vegetables

Examples: Broccoli, lettuce, green beans, bell peppers

Protein Foods

Examples: Lean beef, chicken, pork, fish, eggs, tofu, yogurt, milk (skim, 1%), cheese

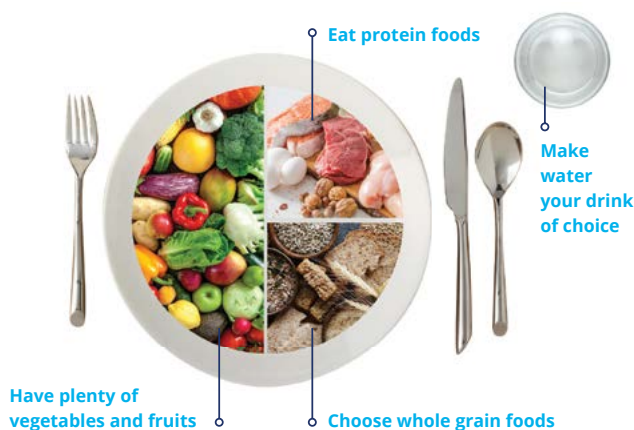
Fats

Examples: Non-hydrogenated margarine, canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil



The Plate Method

Canada's Food Guide suggests filling half your plate with vegetables and fruits. People with diabetes should choose more vegetables than fruit, because most vegetables have less sugar. Divide the other half of your plate between 1/4 protein and 1/4 whole grains and starchy vegetable foods.



Weighing the benefits

Portion size is an important part of weight management, which in turn can help lower your blood sugar levels and reduce your risk of other health problems. Be sure to talk to your health care team about the right approach for you.

Simple tips for healthy eating

Eating well is good for you and for your family. Here are some simple tips to help inform your nutrition choices.



When to eat?

- Be sure to **eat breakfast**
- Eat **three meals per day** at regular times
- Space meals no more than **six hours apart**
- You may want to include a **healthy snack**

How much to eat

- Eat **slowly**
- Stop when you **feel full and satisfied**

What to Eat

- Eat a **variety of foods** at each meal or snack
- Limit **sugars and sweets** (artificial sweeteners are safe in small amounts)
- Limit **high fat** and greasy foods
- Prepare foods **in a healthy way** like baking, boiling, braising, or steaming
- Include foods **high in fibre**
- If you are thirsty, **drink water**



Why every bite counts

The right amount of food gives your body what it needs to be healthy. Eating healthy foods regularly throughout the day will help you manage your diabetes and overall health.

Counting carbohydrates 101

Carbohydrate counting is a flexible way to plan your meals. It focuses on foods that contain carbohydrate, as these raise your blood sugar the most. Follow these steps to help manage your blood sugar levels!

STEP 1 Make healthy food choices

Enjoy a variety of foods across food groups. Use added fats in small amounts. Choose portion sizes to help you to reach or maintain a healthy weight.

STEP 2 Focus on carbohydrates

Carbohydrate is found in many foods including grains and starches, fruits, some vegetables, legumes, milk, yogurt, sugary foods, and many prepared foods.

STEP 3 Determine carbohydrate content

Track what you eat and drink, noting grams of carbohydrate. You may need to use measuring cups and food scales for accurate portion sizes.

STEP 4 Set carbohydrate goals

Your dietitian will help you set a goal for the number of grams of carbohydrate you need at each meal (typically it's around 45-60 g for women and 60-75 g for men) and snack (15-30 g). Aim to meet your target within 5 g per meal/snack.

STEP 5 Monitor effect on blood sugar level

Work with your health-care team to correct blood sugar levels that are too high or too low.

Nutrition Facts			
Per 90 g serving (2 slices)			
Amount %	Daily Value		
Calories 170			
Fat 2.7 g		4 %	
Saturated 0.5 g + Trans 0 g		5 %	
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 200 mg		8 %	
Carbohydrate 36 g		13 %	
Fibre 6 g		24 %	
Sugars 3 g			
Protein 8 g			
Vitamin A 1 %	Vitamin C 0 %		
Calcium 2 %	Iron 1 %		

Finding carbohydrate values using the Nutrition Facts table

The amount of carbohydrate in a food is listed on the Nutrition Facts table.

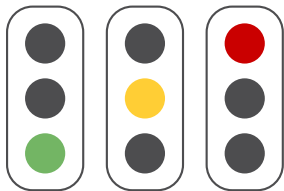
- The amount listed is for the serving size given. Are you eating more, less, or the same amount? Compare your serving size to figure out the amount of carbohydrate you are eating.
- The total amount of carbohydrate in grams is listed first. This number includes starch, sugars and fibre. (Starch is not listed separately.)
- Fibre does not raise blood sugar and should be subtracted from the total carbohydrate (e.g., 36 g carbohydrate – 6 g fibre = 30 g available carbohydrate).

Your glycemic index food guide

The glycemic index (GI) is a scale that ranks a carbohydrate-containing food or drink by how much it raises blood sugar levels after it is eaten or drank. **Choose lower GI foods and drinks more often to help control blood sugar.**

The traffic light analogy

There are three GI categories: green, yellow, and red. Think of them as a traffic light, giving you the green light to move ahead with a healthy food choice, or urging you to put the brakes on a less nutritious one.



Foods with a high GI increase blood sugar higher and faster than foods with a lower GI.

The categories are broken down as follows:

Green = Go

Low GI (55 or less) Choose Most Often

Yellow = Caution

Medium GI (56 to 69) Choose Less Often

Red = Stop and think

High GI (70 or more) Choose Least Often

Foods in the high GI category can be swapped with foods in the medium and/or low GI category to lower GI.

Some foods like green vegetables and lemons are so low in carbohydrate they are considered "free" (i.e. they have no category).

A low GI diet may help you decrease your risk of type 2 diabetes and its complications, decrease your risk of heart disease and stroke, feel full longer, and achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Find a comprehensive list of foods by GI Index colour on the [Diabetes Canada website](#).

Lower your meal's glycemic index using these meal planning ideas.



Cook your pasta al dente (firm). Check your pasta package instructions for cooking time.



Make fruits and milk part of your meal plate. These foods often have a low GI.



Try lower-GI grains, such as barley and bulgur.



Legumes can be grains and starches, or meat and alternatives. Swap half of your higher-GI starch food serving with beans, lentils or chickpeas.

#LetsEndDiabetes

Diabetes Canada is here for YOU on your diabetes journey. We hope you've found this Eating for Wellness e-book helpful. Remember to talk to a registered dietitian for personalized nutrition advice. You can also visit diabetes.ca anytime to access more useful tools!

Resources like this one are made possible thanks to our amazing community of Diabetes Canada supporters. Together, we support the more than 11.7 million Canadians who are living with diabetes or prediabetes in 2022. Diabetes Canada donors are helping to End Diabetes by:

- Investing in the most promising and ground-breaking diabetes research
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- Enabling diabetes management and prevention education across the country
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