

Tips for making healthy food choices

A diabetic diet is all about balance and the choices you make. It works best when you eat a variety of foods in the right portions and at the same times each day. It does not mean that you have to give up your favorite foods.

Your food choices should come from three groups:

- Carbohydrates: 45% to 65% of daily calories
- Proteins: 15% to 20% of daily calories
- Fats: 20% to 35% of daily calories

Eating the right foods can help keep your blood sugar in the normal range. That can give you energy to do the everyday things you enjoy. So how can you help make sure you are getting enough of each type of food each day?

Imagine your plate divided into quarters. Use it to control your portions.

- Fill one-fourth of your plate with carbohydrates (carbs), such as rice, whole grains, potatoes, pasta, corn and peas.
- Fill one-fourth of your plate with lean protein, like meat, fish, poultry and tofu.
- Fill one-half of your plate with non-starchy veggies like green leafy vegetables, broccoli, tomatoes, cauliflower, cucumbers, carrots and salads.

Now that you have an idea about how to fill your plate, let's look at some of your options in each group.

Carbohydrates such as fruits, whole grains and vegetables are vital parts of your diet. Many carbohydrates contain fiber to give you ongoing energy and a sense of feeling full. There are three main types of carbohydrates: starches, sugars and fibers. Finding a good balance between all three is the key. If you're not careful, they are the foods most likely to drive up your blood sugar.

More than half of your daily diet should be filled with vegetables, whole grains and fruits.

It is best to eat sweets and snacks rarely. You can lessen the amount of other carbohydrates you eat on the days you want to splurge. Some good choices you can make to help meet your nutritional needs include:

- Breads – whole grains are best
- Vegetables – from a rainbow of different colors
- Fruits
- Brown rice or whole wheat pasta
- Beans and legumes
- Raw nuts and seeds
- Low-fat dairy products

SMALL DOABLE STEP

- Substitute breads and pasta made with white flour with those made of whole wheat and whole grains.
- Substitute a cup of orange juice with a piece of fresh fruit which includes good fiber.

Proteins are your meat, poultry and fish items. Milk products also contain protein, as do most beans and legumes. They are needed for energy and to keep your body in good shape. Here is a list of some high protein foods:

- Beef – choose lean cuts
- Chicken – go skinless to reduce fat
- Pork
- Fish – bake, grill or broil instead of frying
- Beans
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Milk
- Nuts

SMALL DOABLE STEP

- Choose a 6-inch roast beef or oven-roasted chicken sub over a 6-inch tuna sub loaded with fattening mayonnaise.
- Gradually move from whole milk products to 2%, 1% and finally fat-free milk and yogurts.

Fats should make up the smallest portion of your daily diet. Fats are found in many processed foods so be sure to read the labels. Some fats are better than others. In fact, we need fats in our diet to keep our body working well.

Unhealthy fats are trans and saturated. Healthy fats are monosaturated and polyunsaturated. Healthy fats are found in:

- Olive oil
- Vegetable oils
- Nuts and seeds
- Fatty, cold-water fish (such as salmon, mackerel and herring)

These items also contain essential fatty acids, such as omega-3 and omega-6, which can help lower cholesterol. Even a very small amount of fat has a large amount of calories. Foods that include unhealthy fats are: butter, ice cream, coconut oil, cheese, cakes, cookies, crackers, chips, candy and some margarine.

SMALL DOABLE STEPS

- Read labels and substitute healthy fats in place of unhealthy fats.
- Try cooking with olive oil or canola oil in place of butter or margarine.
- Eat peanut butter on apple pieces or celery stalks to get protein, carbs and fiber with your fat.

Some people with diabetes still use *exchanges*, which are a simple way to plan your meals. A full day of meals might include three exchanges of whole grains, three exchanges of protein, three dairy, three vegetables and three fruits.

A dietitian can help you plan your diet and assist you with questions about certain foods and portion sizes. If you have trouble finding a dietitian, call toll free <1-888-830-4300> (people who are deaf or hard of hearing should dial 711 to speak with an Empire diabetes case manager. A diabetes case manager can help connect you to a dietitian who can work with you. Here are some ideas to get you started with making changes to your diet:

- Eat the same amount at around the same times each day.
- Use variety and spice things up with herbs, seasonings, lemon juice and low-sodium soy sauce.
- Be creative.
- Keep telling yourself you can do it.
- Use all the resources available to you.



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- Reward yourself.

Sources:

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diabetes.org

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