



Eating Well With Diabetes

When to eat

Eating at regular times will help prevent low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). Don't skip or delay meals.

- Plan meals with fiber-rich foods such as whole grains or beans, lean protein, and vegetables to control hunger between meals. This helps reduce overeating later.
- Snacks aren't required, but you can eat small healthy snacks if you're hungry or need to prevent low blood sugar.

What to eat

You don't need special food because you have diabetes. Use the plate method to plan healthy meals. Choose healthy carbohydrate (carb) foods, keep protein choices lean and lower in fat, eat plenty of nonstarchy vegetables, and drink water.

- Limit or avoid sugars, refined carbs, and fatty foods.
- Choose high-fiber, heart-healthy foods. Fiber helps keep your blood sugar in control.

The healthy food choices that help your diabetes are beneficial for everyone in your family.

Each day, eat a variety of these foods:

- Whole fruits and vegetables
- Beans, peas, and whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, oatmeal, or whole-wheat bread
- Protein, including fish, poultry (no skin), soy, lean meats, lower fat cheese, or nuts
- Milk, plant-based milk, or Greek or other yogurt with no sugar added
- Heart-healthy fats and oils, such as olive or avocado oil

Limit or avoid sugary drinks, sweets, baked goods, snack chips, and fried or fast foods.

How much to eat

If you eat too much, especially too many foods high in carbs, your blood sugar may get too high. If you eat smaller amounts and spread your meals throughout the day, you can control your blood sugar better and feel healthier.

If one of your goals is to lose weight, losing just 5 percent of your weight—10 pounds if you weigh 200—can help your body and improve blood sugar. It also lowers your risk of heart disease and lowers blood pressure.

What should I know about carbs?

Your body turns most of the carbs you eat into sugar (glucose). When you have diabetes, more sugar stays in your blood so it's not used for energy. Eating healthy carbs, spread throughout your day in small-medium portions, helps with blood sugar management.

- If you eat too many carb foods overall, or too much at once, your blood sugar can rise too high.
- If you take insulin or medications such as glipizide, eating too few carbs can put you at risk for low blood sugars. Work with your dietitian or diabetes team to understand the right amount of carbs for you.

How many carbs should I eat?

Your target range of carbs per meal depends on a variety of factors, including your body's calorie needs, your activity level, and your recommended medication plan.

To understand your carbohydrate targets, ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian.

What foods contain carbs?

Each of these foods contain about 15 grams of carb:

- Small fresh fruit or ½ cup fruit
- ⅓ cup cooked rice or pasta
- ½ cup peas, corn, beans, potatoes, oatmeal, or other cooked grains
- 1 slice bread or 1 small tortilla
- 1 cup milk or 6 to 8 oz plain or Greek yogurt

Sweets and desserts, chips, crackers, and fried foods usually contain a lot of carbs and fats but not much nutrition. You can eat small servings of these as an occasional special treat.

Why should I read food labels?

Reading food labels helps you learn more about the food's carb content and other nutrients.

Check total carb grams and serving size to learn how this food fits into your carb goals. Note that the sugar grams are already included in the total carb grams.

Other tips for healthy foods include choosing those with:

- More fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Less saturated fat, sodium, added sugars, and trans fat.

How do I eat healthier?

A good place to start is to limit less healthy carbs like candy, sodas, or desserts. An easy, stress-free way to help you plan meals without calculating or measuring is the diabetes plate method. All you need is a 9-inch plate and aim for:

- ½ plate of salad or nonstarchy vegetables
- ¼ plate of grains, beans, starchy vegetables, or fruit
- ¼ plate of protein such as chicken or tofu
- drinking mostly water or calorie-free beverages

Limit desserts and sweets. Have fruit as a healthy dessert option.

What else can I do?

There's no one-size-fits-all diet for diabetes. Choose foods that work best for you so you can maintain these changes for a healthier you.

Healthy eating is just one part of caring for your health and diabetes. Staying physically active and managing stress is important too.

Make a small change today to make a big difference.

Learn more

For more healthy eating resources:

- Visit Living Well With Diabetes: kpdoc.org/diabetes.
- Download our **My Doctor Online app** to receive personalized health reminders, manage appointments, and more.



- Call our Wellness Coaching Center:

kpdoc.org/wellnesscoaching

866-251-4514



Let's practice the plate method!

9-inch plate

½ plate
nonstarchy
vegetables



¼ plate
protein

¼ plate carbohydrate
foods like whole
grains, beans, starchy
vegetables, fruit



water or 0 calorie drink

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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