Eating Well with Diabetes

Healthy eating is an important part of managing diabetes, weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. Eating the right types and amounts of foods can also ensure that you get all the nutrients needed for overall good health. This handout is a guide to help you get started with meal planning. It is best to work with a dietitian or diabetes educator to create a meal plan that is right for you.

Get Started: Joslin’s Healthy Plate

Whether you’re brand new to diabetes or have had diabetes for many years, the Healthy Plate method is a tool to get you on your way with meal planning. Both you and your family can use the Plate method to help make sure that you eat a variety of foods.

Here’s how it works:

- Fill one-half of your plate with colorful, nonstarchy vegetables: spinach, broccoli, peppers, carrots, tomatoes or salad.
- Fill a quarter of your plate with a healthy, whole-grain carbohydrate or starchy vegetable: brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, whole-wheat bread, sweet potato or peas.
- Fill another quarter of your plate with protein: lean meat, skinless chicken, eggs, tofu or lower-fat cheese.
- Add a small amount of a heart-healthy fat: canola or olive oil, trans-fat-free margarine, nuts, seeds or avocado.
- Include one to two more carbohydrate choices, such as a small piece of fruit or a serving of lowfat milk or yogurt.

Healthy Eating Tips

- Eat meals at about the same times each day. Try not to skip meals, especially if you take diabetes medicine that increases your risk of low blood glucose.
- Eat about the same amount of carbohydrate foods (bread, pasta, rice, fruit, milk) at your meals and snacks every day, as this will help keep your blood glucose levels steady.
- Focus on foods that contain fiber, such as whole-grain breads and cereals, beans, fruits and vegetables.
- Aim to include fruit and/or vegetables at each of your meals.
- Use healthy, unsaturated fats like olive or canola oil and use less unhealthy saturated and trans fats like butter, shortening and lard.
- Check the food label for sodium in foods like soup, frozen meals, canned vegetables and bread. Compare products and choose those with less sodium.

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Joslin Diabetes Center (www.joslin.org)
Carbohydrate Counting 101

Carbohydrate, or “carb,” counting is a type of meal planning method that is easy to use and can help you manage your diabetes. All carb foods affect your blood glucose, so it’s important to know which foods contain carb and how much carb to aim for at your meals and snacks.

How many carbs should you eat?

Until you see a dietitian for your own meal plan, aim to keep the amount of carb you eat about the same at each meal and snack.

Breakfast

Eat 2–3 carb choices (30–45 grams of carb). Include a healthy protein food such as an egg or yogurt.

Lunch and Dinner

Eat 3–4 carb choices (45–60 grams of carb). Include fruit and non-starchy vegetables. Choose small portions of healthy protein foods.

Snack

If you eat snacks, eat 1–2 carb choices (15–30 grams of carb).

Reading a Food Label

• Find the serving size.
• Find the total carbohydrate grams per serving (1 carb choice = 15 grams of carb)
• Decide how many servings you’ll eat.
• Do not add dietary fiber and sugars to the “total carbohydrate”; they are already included.

Carb-Counting Goals

• Start counting carb choices or grams of carb and aim for______ choices/grams per meal and ______choices/grams at snacks.
• Read food labels for serving size and total grams of carb.
• Make an appointment to meet with a dietitian to learn more.

Carb Choices

Each of the foods below counts as one carb choice. One carb choice = 15 grams carb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starches</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Milk/Yogurt</th>
<th>Sweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 slice of bread</td>
<td>1 small piece of fruit</td>
<td>1 cup nonfat or lowfat milk</td>
<td>½ cup light ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small whole-wheat cracker</td>
<td>¼ cup berries</td>
<td>½ cup canned fruit or juice</td>
<td>2 small cookies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup cooked rice</td>
<td>½ cup canned fruit</td>
<td>¾ cup light yogurt</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. jam, honey or sugar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Counting Combination Foods

1 cup of casserole, stew or Asian-style entree = 15 grams of carb
1 cup of thick and hearty soup (e.g., lentil, split pea, chowder) = 30 grams of carb
1 slice of regular-crust pizza = 30 grams of carb
½ cup pasta or potato salad = 15 grams of carb
1 ounce bread, bagel or English muffin = 15 grams of carb (a 5-ounce bagel would have 75 grams of carb)
**Heart-Healthy Eating**
Following a heart-healthy eating plan, staying at a healthy weight, and being physically active can keep your cholesterol and blood pressure at safe levels, which can help lower your risk for heart disease. A heart-healthy eating plan is based on plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, healthy fats (such as olive or canola oil, nuts and seeds), and lean protein from sources such as fish, poultry, eggs, and legumes such as black beans, lentils and split peas.

**Know Your Numbers**
The first step in lowering your risk for heart disease is to know what your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers are, as well as what your goals are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>How it Works</th>
<th>Goal for Diabetes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LDL cholesterol</td>
<td>“Bad” cholesterol that can lead to blocked arteries in the heart, brain and legs</td>
<td>Less than 100 mg/dl; less than 70 mg/dl with or at high risk for heart disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL cholesterol</td>
<td>“Good” cholesterol that removes LDL cholesterol from the blood</td>
<td>Greater than 40 mg/dl for men; greater than 50 mg/dl for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides</td>
<td>Blood fat that, if too high, may lower HDL and worsen the effect of LDL</td>
<td>Less than 150 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure</td>
<td>The force that moves blood through the body. High blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.</td>
<td>At or below 140/80 mmHg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type of fat in food actually affects your blood cholesterol more than the cholesterol in food. One type of fat, called unsaturated fat, may help lower LDL cholesterol. Saturated and trans fats are not healthy because they can raise LDL and lower HDL cholesterol. Keep in mind that all types of fat are high in calories, so use small amounts, especially if you are trying to lose weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Heart-Healthy Unsaturated Fats</th>
<th>Sources of Unhealthy Saturated and Trans Fats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olive, canola and vegetable oils; trans-fat-free tub margarine</td>
<td>Butter, stick margarine, shortening; palm and coconut oils; partially-hydrogenated fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish, especially salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring</td>
<td>Beef, pork, lamb, veal, poultry with skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts and seeds</td>
<td>Cheese, whole milk and yogurt, cream, sour cream, ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td>Potato chips, crackers and cookies made with unhealthy fats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can help lower your blood pressure by:

- losing a small amount of weight (even 5 to 10 pounds)
- cutting back on sodium (salt) intake: use more herbs and spices instead of salt; rinse canned foods such as tuna and beans before eating; choose lower-sodium versions of foods
- eating more fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods
- being active most days of the week for at least 30 minutes
Eating Out, Eating Right

You can eat out and still manage your diabetes and your weight, but doing so takes a bit of planning. Try to:

• Decide ahead of time where you will go to eat and choose restaurants that offer healthy food options.
• Review the restaurant’s menu and nutrition information (if it’s available) on their website, a mobile app, or a food-counts book. Doing so will help you plan what to order and also help you stay closer to your meal-planning goals.
• Remember to bring your blood glucose meter, your diabetes medicine and any other supplies you may need.

Tips to Eat Healthier at the Restaurant

• Request that the bread or chip basket be removed from the table.
• Share an entrée with your spouse or friend, request a half-portion, or order a child-size portion.
• Ask that sauces, gravies and dressings be served on the side.
• Order broiled, baked, grilled or steamed foods instead of fried or sautéed.
• To limit portions, order a healthy appetizer and a small salad or bowl of soup.
• To keep control of your carb amounts, ask for an extra serving of vegetables instead of rice or potato.
• Ask for a “to go” box upon ordering; when your meal arrives, put half of it in the box right away.
• If you drink alcohol, talk with your dietitian or provider to learn how to safely fit alcohol into your eating plan.

At Home

Try measuring your food portions once in a while using a food scale, measuring cups and measuring spoons. Doing so will help you control portions and be better able to “guesstimate” portion sizes when you’re eating away from home.

Think Smaller Servings

Simply put, most people just need to eat less. Use your hand as a guide: The palm of your hand is equal to about 3-4 ounces of protein. A fist is about 1 cup. The tip of your thumb is about 1 teaspoon, and your whole thumb is about 1 tablespoon.

Useful Resources

Food-count books:
• The Calorie King Calorie Fat & Carbohydrate Counter
• The Diabetes Carbohydrate & Fat Gram Guide
• The ADA Guide to Healthy Restaurant Eating

Websites:
• www.calorieking.com
• www.dietfacts.com
• www.diabetes.org/myfoodadvisor

Mobile apps:
• Drag ‘n Cook
• GoMeals
• Fooducate
• Figwee Portion Explorer
• Calorie King

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