

Healthy Eating and Exercise

Healthy eating and regular exercise can help prevent your blood sugar (glucose) from becoming too high or too low. Improving your diet and becoming more active also helps to keep your heart healthy, your weight down, and gives you more energy.

Eating Right With Diabetes

What you eat can change your blood sugar. It is important to make healthy choices and to eat the right amount of food. Your meals should have a variety of healthy foods that contain protein, fats, and carbohydrates (starches).



Starches change to sugar when eaten.

Simple starches, such as fruit juice, milk, and candy, can quickly **raise your blood sugar.**¹



Complex starches, such as whole grain bread, beans, corn, potatoes, and oatmeal, are high in fiber and **raise your blood sugar more slowly.**¹



Fiber is also found in fruits and vegetables. Complex starches with lots of fiber are good for people with diabetes.

Fiber



Your meals should have lots of vegetables and moderate amounts of protein (meat, fish, eggs) and starch.²

Half your plate should be vegetables



- ◆ Choose complex starches with lots of fiber, like beans, cereals, and brown rice.
- ◆ Look for products that say “whole grain” on them
- ◆ Eat proteins with a small amount of fat, like lean meats, seafood, low-fat dairy products, and beans
- ◆ Avoid eating foods with lots of fat, like butter, whole milk, cooking oil, lard, red meat, and chicken skin because they are bad for your heart
- ◆ Do not eat too many sweets, like cakes, cookies, candy, soda, and fruit juice because they raise your blood sugar too high and can make you gain weight
- ◆ Be aware of portion sizes, but do not skip meals³



If you wait too long to eat, then your blood sugar level can be too low; if you eat meals too often or snack throughout the day, then your blood sugar level can be too high.

Eating at regular mealtimes will help control your blood sugar. It is important to eat after taking insulin to make sure that your blood sugar does not get too low.



Measuring your blood sugar 1 to 2 hours after your meal will help let you know how the types of food you eat can change your blood sugar.

Diabetes and Exercise

Exercise is an important part of your treatment. Becoming more active can help lower blood sugar and keep your heart healthy. Exercise can also give you more energy and help to reduce your stress.

Try to pick activities that you like and will do often. A more active lifestyle can be a fun and easy way to stay healthy!

Here are some ideas to add extra activity to your day:



Take the stairs instead of the elevator



Walk to the store instead of driving, or park farther away from the store and walk



Clean the house, work in the yard, wash the car, or walk the dog



Dance to your favorite music



Play sports or take a bike ride



Go for a walk around a mall

Check with your doctor before starting any new activities. Remember to check your blood sugar before and after increased activity.

When you exercise, you may want to:⁴



Wear good shoes and socks



Drink lots of water



Carry identification that says you have diabetes and a list of your medications, especially if you have type 1 diabetes



Warm up and cool down before and after exercise



Bring a snack or juice to eat in case your blood sugar gets too low. A sugary snack, such as hard candy, milk, or fruit, will help quickly raise your blood sugar

1. Holesh JE, Martin A. Physiology, Carbohydrates. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459280/?report=printable>. Updated February 1, 2019.
2. MedLine Plus. Diabetes Type 2 - Meal Planning. <http://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007429.htm>. Updated May 8, 2019. Accessed June 1, 2019.
3. Cleveland Clinic. Diabetes and the Foods You Eat. <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/4094-diabetes-and-the-foods-you-eat>. Updated April 3, 2015; Accessed June 1, 2019.
4. American Diabetes Association. Injury-Free Exercise – 11 Quick Safety Tips. <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/fitness/get-started-safely/injury-free-exercise.html>. Updated December 17, 2013