



SAY GOODBYE TO DIABETIC DIETS

What you really need to know about food and diabetes

Making healthy food choices is important for everyone, especially for individuals with diabetes or prediabetes. Eating healthy means choosing balanced meals and snacks throughout the day to meet your nutritional needs. When you have diabetes, the food choices you make also play an important role in blood sugar control.

Food for thought:

- Following a diabetic diet is not required. The word diet implies something temporary. A person with diabetes should work on making lifestyle changes that are realistic and maintainable. It takes time and attention, but the benefits are well worth the effort.
- Food that is healthy for people with diabetes is healthy for everyone! People with diabetes do not need special foods or separate foods from the rest of the family.
- No foods are “forbidden”. In fact, any food can fit into a healthy diet. For example, many people with diabetes think that sweets are never allowed, but this is not true. All carbohydrates raise blood sugar, and it is the total amount of carbohydrate at a meal or snack that is most important.
- People with diabetes need carbohydrates, as do all people. But because they raise blood sugar, the amount of carbohydrate at each meal or snack needs to be considered. Excess carbohydrate may contribute to high blood sugars and excess weight. Too little carbohydrate can be dangerous, especially when taking insulin or certain diabetes medicines that can cause a low blood sugar reaction, or “hypoglycemia”.
- Choose carbohydrates with fiber, such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, to help you reach the daily fiber goal of 25-30 grams a day.

- Some carbohydrates raise blood sugars quickly, so including a protein or a small amount of healthy fat with your carbohydrate choice may help slow down this quick blood sugar elevation. Testing your glucose level two hours after a meal or snack will let you know how this worked.
- Foods such as beans, peas and lentils are great choices because they are high in fiber and protein (and low in fat), but remember they count as a starch.
- All vegetables are healthy and appropriate for people with diabetes, especially because they tend to be low in calories and carbohydrates and high in fiber. Choose a variety of vegetables in different colors for the most health benefits.
- There are a few vegetables that are starchier than others, which means they contain more carbohydrates. These are potatoes, yams, corn and peas. Keep this in mind when planning a meal.
- Choose whole fruits instead of juice. Juice and other sugary beverages can raise blood sugar and provide excess calories without providing much nutritional benefit.
- It is important for all people to limit the amount of saturated and trans fats in their diet, and this is especially true for people with diabetes. Limit high-fat items such as fried foods, doughnuts, croissants, bacon, hot dogs, salami, bologna, pepperoni, butter, stick margarine, cream, whole milk, and full-fat cheese. Read nutrition labels when available.

Eating healthy foods in appropriate amounts plays a key role in weight control and can help improve diabetes management. Remember, losing just 10% of your body weight could improve your health and your blood sugars.

For more information about diabetes, visit www.longislanddiabetes.org or contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County at 631-727-7850 ext. 123.

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