

Healthy Eating With Diabetes

Most people with diabetes have learned that what they choose to eat and drink can help raise or lower their blood sugar levels after meals. So which foods should you choose if you have diabetes?

There are four components in food that can affect your blood sugar:

- Carbohydrates
- Fiber
- Protein
- Fat

Carbohydrates raise blood sugar faster and have the greatest effect on blood glucose compared to foods that contain proteins or fats. Fiber, protein, and fat can blunt the rise in blood sugar after a meal.

Aiming for a healthy balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat in your meals can help you manage your blood sugars. But it's important to choose quality carbohydrates and smart fats, such as:

- Vegetables, beans, whole grains, and fruit for carbs.
- Fish, nuts and seeds, avocado, olives, extra virgin olive oil, and canola oil for fat.

Even so, two people with diabetes may respond differently to the same meal. You may want to check your blood sugar regularly before and after a meal and look for patterns between what you eat and drink and the blood sugar levels that result. You also may want to check the amount of carbohydrates eaten with each meal and try to keep the grams consistent with each meal. This can help you take charge of your blood sugars.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet when you have diabetes doesn't mean you have to deprive yourself of foods that taste good. The sample menu and recipes below represent meal options that have a good balance of protein and fat and a great source of fiber. These meal options are suggestions that you can plug into your diet -- in the right portion sizes -- along with any additional fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy, protein, or fats in your plan. Don't forget to pay attention to the sodium in your diet. Read labels and choose foods that are low in sodium.

Sample Daily Menu Options

Breakfast

For breakfast, here's an example of how you might work in a high-fiber carbohydrate along with some lean protein.

High-fiber carb choices:

- Whole grain cereals (hot or cold) with fruit
- Whole grain bread, English muffin or bagel
- Whole grain waffles or pancakes with fruit

Lean protein (low in saturated fat):

- Higher omega-3 egg blended with 2 egg whites for egg dish. Add vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, or tomatoes.
- Low-fat milk or soy milk for your cereal or as beverage
- Part skim cheese added to your omelet
- Low or nonfat yogurt with fruit or in a smoothie, or enjoy with cereal

Smart fats:

- Avocado added to your omelet
- Nuts for cereals and yogurt parfait
- Extra virgin olive oil used in omelet
- Canola oil used in whole grain muffins, pancakes, waffles

Lunch

Sandwich or wrap made with whole grain bread or tortilla and a lean protein such as:

- Roasted turkey or skinless chicken or lean beef or pork
- Part skim cheese or soy cheese
- Water-packed tuna dressed in a vinaigrette or yogurt or light mayo
- Falafels
- Roasted vegetables, Bean-based lunch such as:
- Bean burrito
- Hummus with whole grain bread or veggie dippers
- Chili with lean meat or vegetarian, or stew featuring beans

Entrée salad made with:

- Dark green lettuce
- Lots of vegetables
- Lean meat or fish or beans or cheese plus avocado and nuts if desired
- Dressing made with extra virgin olive oil or canola oil or yogurt.

Dinner

High-fiber carb choices:

- Cooked grains like brown rice, quinoa, barley, bulgur, amaranth, etc.
- Whole wheat breads -- tortilla, pita, buns, etc.
- Colorful vegetables on the side or with the entrée
- Dark green lettuce for side or dinner salad

- Fresh fruit on the side or with the entrée
- Lean protein (low in saturated fat):
- Grilled or baked fish, by itself or in a mixed dish such as tacos
 - Skinless poultry -- grilled, baked or stir-fried
 - Lean beef or pork -- sirloin, tenderloin -- with no visible fat
 - Part skim cheese in entrees such as eggplant parmesan, vegetarian pizza on whole wheat crust, vegetable lasagna, enchiladas, etc.

Smart fats:

- Extra virgin olive oil or canola used in sensible amounts to cook the above
- Nuts added to entrée or side dishes
- Avocado or olives with entrée or side dishes

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