

Just the basics

Latin American



Diabetes is a condition in which your body cannot properly use and store food for energy. The fuel that your body needs is called glucose, a form of sugar. Glucose comes from foods such as fruit, milk, some vegetables, starchy foods and sugar.

To control your blood sugar (glucose) you will need to eat healthy foods, be active and you may need to take pills and/or insulin.

Here are some tips to help you until you see a registered dietitian.

Tips:	Reasons:
Eat three meals per day at regular times and space meals no more than six hours apart. You may benefit from a healthy snack.	Eating at regular times helps your body control blood sugar levels.
Limit sugars and sweets such as sugar cane, honey, guava paste, nectar, aguapanela, dulce de leche, condensed milk, regular pop, desserts and candies..	The more sugar you eat, the higher your blood sugar will be. Artificial sweeteners can be useful substitutes.
Limit the amount of high-fat food you eat such as fatty cuts or processed meat (chorizo, sausage, bologna), fried foods, tamales, pupusas, arepas, tacos, empanadas, tostadas, chicharrones and fried plantain.	High-fat foods may cause you to gain weight. A healthy weight helps with blood sugar control and is healthier for your heart.
Eat more high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads, tortillas and cereals; lentils, beans and peas, brown rice, vegetables and fruits.	Foods high in fibre may help you feel full and may lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
If you are thirsty, drink water.	Drinking regular pop and fruit juice will raise your blood sugar.
Add physical activity to your life.	Regular physical activity will improve your blood sugar control.
Limit alcohol consumption.	Alcohol can affect blood sugar levels and cause you to gain weight.

Plan for healthy eating



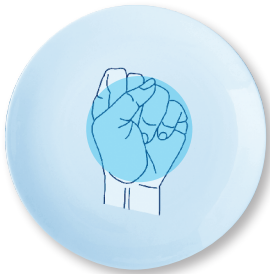
Photo: Michael Alberstat

- Eat more vegetables and green salads. These are very high in nutrients and low in calories.
- Choose fish, chicken and lean meat. Select more vegetable protein such as beans or chickpeas.
- Select plant oils such as olive and canola, and nuts instead of animal fats, coconut or palm oil.
- Eat small portions of grains and starches, such as yuca/cassava, corn, and boiled or baked plantains. Try to choose lower glycemic-index foods like whole grain tortillas, brown rice, and quinoa.
- Include low-fat milk or plain yogurt and a piece of fruit to complete your meal.

It's natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you include your favourite foods in a personalized meal plan.

Handy portion guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



Grains and starches*/ Fruits*

Choose an amount the size of your fist for grains or starches, or fruit.

Milk and alternatives*

Drink up to 1 cup (250 mL) of low-fat milk with a meal.



Vegetables*

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose brightly coloured vegetables (e.g., green or yellow beans, broccoli).



Meat and alternatives*

Choose an amount the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



Fat*

Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

* Food group names taken from *Beyond the Basics: Meal Planning for Healthy Eating, Diabetes Prevention and Management*.
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- Diabetes Canada recommends that all people with diabetes should receive advice on nutrition from a registered dietitian. Consider learning about carbohydrate counting, and different types of eating patterns (e.g. Mediterranean style, Nordic style, DASH or vegetarian diet) at your appointment.
- Be sure to eat breakfast. It provides a good start to the day.
- Try to prepare more of your meals at home and use whole, unprocessed ingredients.
- Eat together as a family more often to model healthy eating behaviours to children and teenagers.
- If you are planning on fasting, talk to your health-care team 1 to 2 months in advance.

Sample meal plan

For smaller appetites

Breakfast:

Whole grain toast (2 slices)
 1 orange
 Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Peanut butter (2 tbsp, 30 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Lunch:

1 chicken wrap
 1 whole grain tortilla (10", 25cm)
 baked chicken (2 oz, 60g)
 avocado (1/6th)
 lettuce, tomato, cucumber
 salsa (1 tbsp, 15mL)
 Salad
 Grapes (½ cup, 125 mL)
 Low-fat plain yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Dinner:

Vegetable and bean stew
 black beans (½ cup, 125 mL)
 corn (½ cup, 125 mL)
 potatoes (½ cup, 125 mL)
 onion, zucchini, peas and carrots
 Brown rice (2/3 cup, 150 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

½ medium mango
 7 almonds

Increase your physical activity

- Build time for physical activity into your daily routine.
- Try to be active most days of the week.
- Walk whenever you can, instead of taking the car.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the amount of effort; for instance, progress from strolling to brisk walking.
- Make family activities active; try swimming or skating instead of watching TV or a movie.
- Try new activities; learn to dance, play basketball, or ride a bike.
- Enjoy your improved sense of health and well-being.



Follow a healthy lifestyle

- Have at least 3 out of the 4 key food groups at each meal from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*:
 - vegetables and fruit
 - grain products
 - milk and alternatives
 - meat and alternatives
- Have portion sizes that will help you reach or maintain a healthy body weight.
- Include high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads, cereals, and brown rice, fresh fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- Make lower fat choices (e.g. use skim milk and lean ground beef, trim fat on meat, chicken etc., and use small amounts of added fat such as oil and salad dressings).
- Healthy eating habits should be built around a healthy lifestyle – keep active every day.

Sample meal plan

For bigger appetites

Breakfast:

Hot cereal (¾ cup, 175 mL)
Whole grain toast (2 slices)
1 scrambled egg with tomatoes, peppers and onions
Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
Tea or coffee

Lunch:

Brown rice (1 cup, 250 mL)
Boiled beans (½ cup, 125 mL)
Lean beef steak (3 oz, 90 g)
Stewed zucchini and carrots
Green salad
 lettuce, tomato, cucumber
 dressing: lime juice and olive oil (1 tsp, 5 mL)
1 orange
Tea or coffee

Afternoon Snack:

Grapes (½ cup, 125 mL)
Cocoa with 1% or skim milk (1 cup, 250 mL)

Dinner:

1 large potato or 2 whole grain tortillas (6", 15 cm)
Baked fish (4 oz, 120 g)
Green beans
Green salad with low-fat salad dressing (1 tsp, 5 mL)
Pineapple (2 slices, ¾ cup)
Low-fat plain yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)
Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

Low-fat cheese, e.g. partially skimmed mozzarella (1 oz, 30 g)
Whole grain crackers (4)
1 small banana

Related articles: *Physical activity and diabetes, Glycemic index, Eating away from home, Alcohol and diabetes, Managing weight and diabetes*

**DIABETES
CANADA**

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