

Diabetes is a disease that prevents your body from using the foods you eat for energy. Most of your body's energy comes from carbohydrate. Carbohydrate is broken down to form glucose (blood sugar). Eating the right amount of carbohydrate at each meal will keep your blood sugar in the right range, so it does not go too high or too low. Diet and exercise are both important ways to keep blood sugar in a healthy range, so you feel your best and reduce health problems. This handout provides some tips to help you manage your diabetes.

Establish Regular Eating Habits

- Eat regular meals, and snacks (as directed by your dietitian) each day. If you are taking diabetes pills or insulin, eat a snack at bedtime.
- Space meals no more than 4-5 hours apart.
- Try not to skip meals - keep snacks, such as crackers or fruit, on hand for when meals are not available.
- Eat similar amounts of food at about the same time every day.
- Try to include protein such as nuts, meat, eggs or cheese at each meal.

Food Choices

- Your food choices can make a difference in your diabetes control.
- Eat a variety of foods every day. You can eat the same foods as your family. Just remember to eat smaller servings.
- **Carbohydrate** is the main nutrient in food that affects blood sugar levels.
- **Foods that contain carbohydrates:**
 - Starches
 - Grains (bread, cereal, rice, pasta, tortillas and crackers)
 - Starchy vegetables (corn, potatoes, peas and winter squash)
 - Dried beans and lentils
 - Snacks (chips, pretzels, popcorn and granola bars)
 - Fruits and fruit juices
 - Milk, yogurt and milk substitutes (rice milk and soy milk)
 - Sweets, desserts and sweetened beverages
- Non-starchy vegetables, such as asparagus, broccoli, spinach and tomato, contain small amounts of carbohydrate. These will only affect your blood sugar levels if eaten in large amounts.
- Protein and fat affect blood sugar less than carbohydrate.



Carbohydrate and Blood Sugar

The right balance between carbohydrate and insulin (made by the pancreas or from injections) keeps your blood sugar level normal. When you eat, how much you eat, and whether or not you include snacks should be based on your lifestyle, medications and meal planning goals. People who use diabetic medications and some types of insulin **need to eat the same amount of food at the same times each day.**

Patient Education

Nutrition

Blood Sugar Guidelines

	Goal
Fasting	80-130 mg/dl
Bedtime	90-150 mg/dl
1-2 hours after meals	less than 180 mg/dl

Food is not the only factor that will raise your blood sugar. Stress or illness and medications may also cause a high blood sugar but eating consistently will help you have better blood sugar control.

Healthy Eating

Healthy eating involves more than just limiting your carbohydrates! Be sure you eat a variety of foods. Try to include at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, 6 servings of grains (3 whole grains), and 2 low fat dairy servings each day. Remember to choose lean protein foods, like fish, poultry and round or loin cuts of meat. Fats should be 'heart healthy' – olive, canola, and peanut oils, nuts and avocados.

Activity/Exercise

Exercise is important for people with diabetes. Exercise will help you feel your best, manage your weight and lower blood sugar. Remember to eat before exercising. Taking medications or insulin and exercising on an empty stomach will lead to a blood sugar that is too low!

Activity does not have to be strenuous exercise. Find some creative ways to gradually increase your daily activity. Your goal is to include 30 minutes of activity most days if approved by your doctor. Consider the following ideas:

- Dance to your favorite music
- Walk around the block
- Take the stairs
- Mow the lawn
- Park in a space farther away from the entrance
- Take a dance or exercise class
- Ride your bike through the neighborhood

Obtain Further Education

To learn more about diabetes, controlling your blood glucose and to obtain a meal plan designed for you, see your registered dietitian or diabetes educator. She/he can also help you with tips on grocery shopping, reading food labels and eating away from home.

References:

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and American Diabetes Association. *Choose Your Foods: Food Lists for Diabetes*. 2014. Print.
- American Diabetes Association. "Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes—2016." *Diabetes Care* 39 (2016): S26-S43. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.
- "Checking Your Blood Glucose (Blood Sugar): American Diabetes Association." American Diabetes Association. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2016.
- "Type 2 Diabetes Nutrition Therapy." *Nutrition Care Manual*. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Oct. 2011.

For more nutrition information or to speak with a Registered Dietitian, call