

Patient information

Basic dietary advice for people newly diagnosed with Diabetes

Healthy Eating

The diet for people with diabetes is not a special diet—it should be a healthy diet that all your friends and family can enjoy. Try to eat regularly and include a variety of foods from each of the following food groups:

Breads, rice, potatoes, pasta, cereals and other starchy food

Make one of these foods a part of every meal.

Choose wholemeal, wholegrain, brown or high fibre white bread.

Milk, yoghurts cheese and other dairy foods

Try to include at least 3 servings throughout the day.

Meat, fish, eggs and beans (protein foods)

Aim to include these foods with 2 of your meals daily.

Try to eat more fish and aim for 1 or 2 portions of oily fish such as salmon, sardines, or pilchards each week.

Vegetables and fruit

Aim to have a mixture of 5 portions (about a handful) of vegetables/salad and fruit each day and choose from a variety including fresh, frozen, or tinned.

Sugar and sweet foods

These do not need to be avoided and small amounts can be included in your diet. Sweets, chocolate, and cake are all high in sugar and will increase your blood glucose level quickly. Foods that contain less than 5g sugar per serving are considered low sugar and over 10g per serving is considered high sugar.

Salt

Too much salt in your diet is not good for you. Try to avoid adding salt to your food and limit salty processed foods such as crisps and ready meals.

Carbohydrates (sugary and starchy foods)

Carbohydrates play an important role in your body. They are digested and break down to produce glucose. This glucose goes into your body cells to give them energy. Cells are everywhere in your body, including your muscles and brain. When they have a good supply of glucose, you can carry out your daily activities and you can concentrate properly.

Insulin lets your body use the supply of glucose. When you eat foods that contain carbohydrate you will make your blood glucose/sugar rise – so your body needs to have INSULIN with foods that have carbohydrate in them. Whether that is insulin you make yourself, insulin which is injected, or medication which helps your own insulin production.

The more carbohydrates you eat, the more insulin you will need to keep your blood glucose within target range. Aim to keep your carbohydrate portions **similar** at each meal.

All carbohydrate foods need to be taken into account; it is not just sugar in the diet that affects blood glucose levels. 'Carbohydrate' includes:

Starchy foods (turned into glucose)	Naturally occurring sugars	Added sugars (sucrose)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cereals• Flour• Bread• Pasta• Rice• Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fruit (fructose)• Milk and yogurt (lactose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sweets• Chocolate• Sugary drinks• Cakes• Desserts

Aim to keep portions of carbohydrate similar at each meal.

Choose good quality carbs from starches, fruit, and dairy. Also choose high fibre, wholegrain and 'brown' varieties whenever possible.

A moderate carbohydrate diet contains 130-225g of carbohydrates.

Therefore, initially aim for 3 regular meals containing 50-60g of good quality carbohydrates. To make them balanced also include protein and vegetables/salad. Try to keep these meals 4-5 hours apart.

Aim for low carb snacks, see separate leaflet.

Methods of carbohydrate counting

- 1. Carbs and Cals book or mobile phone app:** Photos of food and provides amount of carbohydrates in varying portion sizes (www.carbsandcals.com).
- 2. Food labels:** Look for 'total carbohydrate' in the nutritional information table usually found on the back or side of packaging.
- 3. Handy measures:**
 - 2 medium slices of bread (30g carbs) are approximately equal to 3 medium serving spoons of rice, pasta or mashed potato or 3 egg sized potatoes (all 30g Carbs).
 - 1 piece of fruit (15g carbs), or 1 fruit yoghurt (15g carbs) or 1 small packet of crisps (15g carbs) are all roughly equal to 1 medium slice of bread (15g carbs).
 - A meal containing 2 slices of medium bread, a piece of fruit and a yoghurt is roughly equal to 6 serving spoons of pasta, rice or 6 hen egg size potatoes (60g carbs).

How can slow and fast absorbing carbohydrates affect my blood glucose levels?

Glycaemic index (GI) is a measure of how quickly carbohydrates are broken down into glucose and how quickly the glucose levels rise.

Carbohydrates with a low GI are preferred, as they are broken down more slowly and cause a slower release of glucose into the bloodstream and a gentle rise in blood sugar.

Carbohydrates with a high GI are broken down quickly, causing a rapid rise in blood glucose levels.

Choose low GI options more often. Examples include granary bread, granary crackers, basmati rice, wholegrain cereals, new potatoes with skins, oats, bran flakes, wholemeal pasta, etc.

Foods to avoid High sugar/low fibre	Foods to take instead. Low sugar/high fibre
Sugar – all types white, brown, Demerara, Muscovado, Glucose Sorbitol Sweeteners, containing sugar e.g sucron, fructose, fruisana	No calorie artificial sweeteners, in tablet, liquid or granulated form. Eg Canderell®, Sweetex®, Hermesetas®, Splenda®, Nutrene®, Flix®, Saxin®
Ordinary jam, marmalade, honey, syrup, treacle, lemon curd	Reduced sugar varieties of jams or marmalades and pure fruit spreads
Tinned fruit in syrup or light syrup	Tinned fruit in natural juice or water
Sweet biscuits	Plain biscuits, e.g. digestive, rich tea, marie, Hovis® oatcakes
Chocolate and sweets	A piece of fresh fruit for snacks or a plain biscuit. Sugar free gum
Sugary puddings. Avoid products which are low fat unless they are also low in sugar	Homemade milk puddings with sweeteners, sugar free whips, sugar free jelly, diet/lite yoghurts, (e.g. Muller lite®, Weight Watchers®, Ski®, Shape® or supermarkets own brands), diet fromage frais
Ordinary fizzy drinks or pop, cola, lemonade	Use low calorie, sugar free diet or slimline varieties.
Ordinary squash Avoid hi-juice, or low sugar varieties e.g. Ribena light and lucozade light	Sugar free squash e.g. Ribena Toothkind®, Robinsons Special R®, supermarket own brands (no added sugar)
Fruit juices with added sugar	Unsweetened fruit juice-keep to one small glass per day with a meal
Sugary or honey coated breakfast cereals e.g. honey nut cornflakes, Sugar Puffs®	Plain cereal e.g. Shredded Wheat®, All Bran®, sugar free muesli, porridge, bran flakes, Weetabix®
Drinking chocolate, Horlicks®, Ovaltine®	Cocoa made with mild and suitable sweetener, low calorie instant drinks, Ovaltine Options®, Carnation chocolate®, Cadburys Highlights®, Options or supermarket brands of 40 calories chocolate drinks

Fats

These foods include butter, margarine and cooking oils and convenience foods such as crisps, nuts, savoury and sweet pastries, ice cream and chocolate.

These foods should be eaten and used sparingly as eating too much can lead to being overweight.

Try to choose spreads and cooking oils which are higher in mono or polyunsaturated fats such as olive oil, rapeseed, or sunflower oil as these are better for your heart.

Fat doesn't affect blood glucose on its own, but it can slow the absorption of glucose from other foods. This is seen with fatty meals e.g. takeaways.

Nuts, seeds, and cheese are high in fat so limit these if weight is an issue with you.

Proteins

Proteins biggest job is to build muscles and other tissues in your body. It also helps fight off diseases and bugs, and helps to repair the cells. Foods that contain protein do not tend to affect your blood glucose.

Lean cuts of meat, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds, peas, beans and pulses provide protein, zinc, and iron

Avoid diabetic products, biscuits, and chocolate. They contain the same amount of fat as normal varieties and are not lower in calories. Some products contain sorbitol which can cause diarrhoea if eaten in large amounts.

Some examples of small snacks

If you eat snacks keep them small and keep to one snack (approx. 5-10g of carbohydrate) between meals only.

These snacks are low in carbohydrate (approximately 5g carbohydrate)

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| ★ 1 very small apple or pear | ★ 1 rich tea biscuit |
| ★ 1 malted milk biscuit | ★ 5 cherries |
| ★ Half a grapefruit | ★ 1 kiwi fruit |
| ★ 1 plum | ★ 100g raspberries |
| ★ 100g plain yoghurt | ★ 1 fresh apricot |

- ★ 45g olives
- ★ 40g blueberries (20 berries)
- ★ 2 breadsticks (add to vegetables and dips listed on the other page)
- ★ 1 cracker + low fat cream cheese/tuna/salmon/salad
- ★ some brands of flavoured yoghurt – check product labels.
- ★ home-made ice lollies, made with no added sugar squash.
- ★ 85g strawberries (7 berries)
- ★ 1 Satsuma/Clementine/tangerine

These foods are low in carbohydrate but also high in calories (some are also high in salt). If you are trying to lose weight, only choose them occasionally (once or twice a week) and in small amounts.

- ★ 70g peanuts
- ★ 25g sunflower seeds
- ★ 1 mini Scotch egg (20g weight)
- ★ 30 cashew nuts
- ★ 10-15g crisps (1/2 a small bag)

What about alcohol?

Whether you have diabetes or not the daily government guidelines for alcohol intake remain no more than 14 units a week, spread over 3 or more days, avoid binge drinking and have several days a week where you do not drink alcohol at all.

For further information become a member of the leading UK diabetes charity or visit their website.

Diabetes UK Diabetes UK Central Office

Tel: 0345 123 2399*

Fax: 020 7424 1001

Email: info@diabetes.org.uk <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

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