

# following a meal plan

meal plan • meal plan • meal plan • meal plan • meal plan

Following a few basic nutritional guidelines can go a long way toward helping you manage your diabetes. And in spite of what you may have heard, it doesn't mean you have to give up the foods you enjoy. You just have to learn how different foods and amounts of food affect your body—and make wise choices throughout the day.

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#### **RX FOR AN RD**

Your diabetes care team may include a **registered dietitian (RD)**. In fact, many diabetes educators are also dietitians.

An RD can teach you about nutrition, help you choose foods and plan menus, monitor your progress, and encourage you to stick with your meal plan.

## Meal plan basics

This section tells you what a meal plan is, how it fits with your self-management plan—and how you can develop one.

### **What is a meal plan?**

A meal plan is a set of guidelines for when to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. It isn't a strict set of rules—there's really no such thing as a “diabetic diet.” Instead, it's a tool to help you develop and maintain consistent, healthy eating habits.

Your plan can be a written worksheet, or just a set of principles that drive your decisions throughout the day. It can be highly individualized for your unique situation, or kept more general. It all depends on you and the goals you set with your healthcare providers.

### **Why is a meal plan important?**

A meal plan is a vital part of your diabetes treatment. It helps you control your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol. It can also help you reach other goals like losing weight. By helping you eat healthy, it can reduce your symptoms and lower your chance of diabetes complications.

### **How do I get a meal plan?**

If you want the structure of a written meal plan, call the diabetes education center near you (see page 104 for phone numbers). Many diabetes educators are dietitians, and they can work with you to create a written plan specifically for you. To do this, they'll consider your lifestyle and food preferences as well as your diabetes and other health risks.

What if you don't have a written plan? You still need to use the ideas in this chapter to guide your food choices. Remember, your eating habits have a big impact on your health—and everyone with diabetes has to make a few adjustments in the beginning. It's a little extra work, but nothing out of the ordinary for a healthy eater. And with time, meal planning will probably become second nature to you.

### Meal Plan

Name: Anna S. Date: 8-16-04  
 Dietitian: Lucy Phone: 543-6600

If you're counting carbohydrates, remember: 1 choice = 15 grams of carbohydrate

daily targets			
	grams total	percent daily calories	servings per day
carbohydrates	180	48%	12
fat	20	12%	4
calories	1500		
other			

sodium (salt): < 2500 mg      fiber: 25-35 g/day  
 alcohol: \_\_\_\_\_      caffeine: \_\_\_\_\_  
 cholesterol: \_\_\_\_\_      calcium: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Choices	Menu Ideas
Stick to regular eating patterns	Choose foods wisely—and watch your portions	Enjoy your food
breakfast	<u>3</u> Carbohydrate ( .....grams) ↓ Starch ( .....grams) ↓ Fruit ( .....grams) ↓ Non-starchy vegetable ( .....grams) ↓ Milk & yogurt ( .....grams) _____ Protein: meat or meat substitute ( .....grams) _____ Fat: oil & fat ( .....grams)	½ c. cooked cereal ½ banana 1 c. 1% milk Sugar substitute if desired
snack	↓ Carbohydrate ( .....grams) ↓ Protein ( .....grams) ↓ Fat ( .....grams)	15-20 baked snack chips 10 peanuts
lunch	<u>3</u> Carbohydrate ( .....grams) ↓ Starch ( .....grams) ↓ Fruit ( .....grams) ↓ Non-starchy vegetable ( .....grams) ↓ Milk & yogurt ( .....grams) <u>2</u> Protein: meat or meat substitute ( .....grams) <u>2</u> Fat: oil & fat ( .....grams)	2 slices whole wheat bread ½ c. cranberries 1 c. spinach 2 oz. lean turkey lunch meat 1 T. reduced fat mayo 2 T. avocado
snack	↓ Carbohydrate ↓ Protein _____ Fat	8 animal crackers 1 mozzarella string cheese
dinner	<u>4</u> Carbohydrate ( .....grams) ↓ Starch ( .....grams) ↓ Fruit ( .....grams) ↓ Non-starchy vegetable ( .....grams) ↓ Milk & yogurt ( .....grams) <u>2</u> Protein: meat or meat substitute ( .....grams) ↓ Fat: oil & fat ( .....grams)	¾ c. couscous 1 c. raspberries ½ c. light ice cream 2-3 oz. salmon ½ c. cooked broccoli with 1 tsp. butter or margarine

◀ **WHAT CAN I EAT?**

A written meal plan (like the one shown here) is a great tool to help you focus on your nutritional goals, stay on track, and train yourself to make healthy choices about food every day.



**Healthy eating for people with diabetes: key activities**

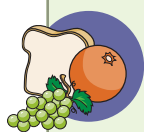
Healthy eating isn't as difficult as it sounds. And in spite of what you might think, your meal plan actually makes life simpler. How? By helping you with these three key activities:

- Establish consistent eating patterns
- Choose foods wisely
- Control your portion sizes

The next few pages give you more information on each of these key activities.

### MAJOR TYPES OF FOOD NUTRIENTS

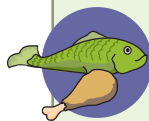
You need each of these food nutrients in your diet:



#### Carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates are your body's main source of energy.

They're plentiful in starchy foods like bread and rice, and in fruits and vegetables.



#### Proteins.

Protein in your diet helps build and repair your hard-working muscles, bones, organs, and other tissues. Protein is found in fish, poultry, meat, and eggs.



#### Fats.

Your body uses fats to repair your cells and help your cells send signals. And as you probably know, your body also stores fat in various places around your body—often your hips and waist—as a “backup” energy source. Fats come from oils, nuts, butters, and other sources.

### FROM RANDOM TO REGULAR

Just like a day planner helps you organize your work, a meal plan can structure and improve your eating habits.

## Establish consistent eating patterns

Food and blood glucose levels are closely connected. When you eat sporadically—for example, too much at one time, too little at another—your blood glucose levels also tend to be sporadic. But when you keep food intake consistent, you can smooth out some of the peaks and valleys in your blood glucose levels. This helps keep your levels within your target range.

### What's in a pattern?

Your eating pattern consists not only of the times you eat throughout the day, but also the amount and types of foods you choose. Different foods affect your blood glucose in different ways, and it helps to keep this in mind as you plan your meals.

### The carbohydrate connection

Your body breaks down the foods you eat into three major types of nutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Of these, **carbohydrates have the biggest impact on your blood glucose**. That's because most carbohydrates get broken down into glucose—while very little of the fats and proteins that you eat become glucose.

Because of the strong link between carbohydrates in your food and glucose in your bloodstream, it helps to know a few key facts about this carbohydrate connection:

- The more carbohydrates you eat at one time, the higher your blood glucose goes. So if you eat too many carbohydrates for a meal or snack, your blood glucose can go too high. Your body simply can't move the glucose into your cells quickly enough.
- Some foods contain more carbohydrates per serving than others. This is true even for foods that seem similar. For example, a half-cup of corn kernels has twice as many carbohydrates as a popcorn cake.
- Consistency is key. If you're consistent in the amount of carbohydrate you eat, you have a better chance of maintaining consistently healthy blood glucose levels.






**For these reasons, your meal plan focuses on helping you track the carbohydrates you eat, and spreading them evenly throughout the day. You DON'T want to avoid carbohydrates altogether—you just need to stick to your meal plan.**

## Eating patterns and the rest of your plan

As you settle into a routine, keep in mind that MOST people—not just people with diabetes—eat healthier, feel better, and have more energy when they eat regular meals. And for you, there’s an added bonus: because your diet is more stable day to day, you can better anticipate your body’s needs, and adjust the rest of your self-management plan accordingly. Balancing food intake with medications and physical activity will become that much easier.

### how to establish consistent eating patterns

Follow your meal plan to help make sure you do the following:

-  **Eat meals and snacks at regular times every day.** This helps you keep your carbohydrate intake consistent throughout the day.
-  **Don’t eat between meals, except for planned snacks.** Eating between meals will make it harder for you to maintain a healthy weight—and control your blood glucose.
-  **Don’t skip meals.** When you don’t eat, your blood glucose may drop too low. Also, when you finally do eat, hunger may prompt you to eat too much. This can cause the opposite problem, high blood glucose.
-  **Eat about the same amount** of carbohydrate each day.
-  **Evenly space your carbohydrates** throughout the day.

## MYTH

“People with diabetes have to eat special food.”

## TRUTH

Just because you have diabetes doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy the same foods as everyone else. You just need to do a bit of planning and make healthy food choices.

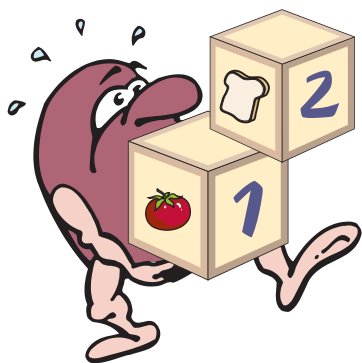
## DEAR DIARY?

Consider keeping a food diary. This can help you see how your food choices and eating habits affect your blood glucose.



## Choose foods wisely

A meal plan doesn't take away your food choices—it just helps you make better ones. And the truth is, the nutritional guidelines for people with diabetes aren't all that strict, unfamiliar, or hard-to-follow. For the most part, they're the same guidelines that everyone should follow to improve their health.



### Six building blocks

You can make better food choices with the 6 basic nutritional building blocks shown below. These ideas are the foundation of good nutrition—helping to protect your heart and blood vessels, ensure you get enough nutrients, and keep your whole body strong and running smoothly.

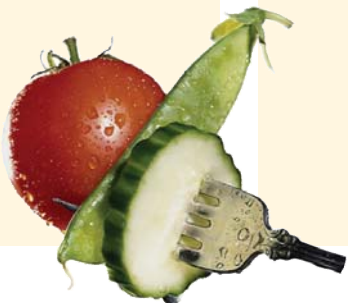
## Build a better diet with these



### Eat lots of fruits and vegetables

For more vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants:

- For lunch and dinner, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Snack on vegetables and fruits—not chips or candy.
- Buy pre-washed, pre-cut vegetables for quicker salads and snacks.
- Consume whole fruits more often than juices—and watch out for syrup or other added sugars in canned and frozen fruit.
- Eat more dark green, orange, and yellow vegetables.



### Eat more whole grains

To get the most good from bread, rice, cereal, and other grains:

- Make half of your grains whole. (Read the label!)
- Choose bread and tortillas made from whole wheat or corn—not white flour.
- Switch to brown rice.
- For breakfast, eat oatmeal or cold cereals with a whole grain as the first ingredient on the label.



### Choose unsaturated fats and oils

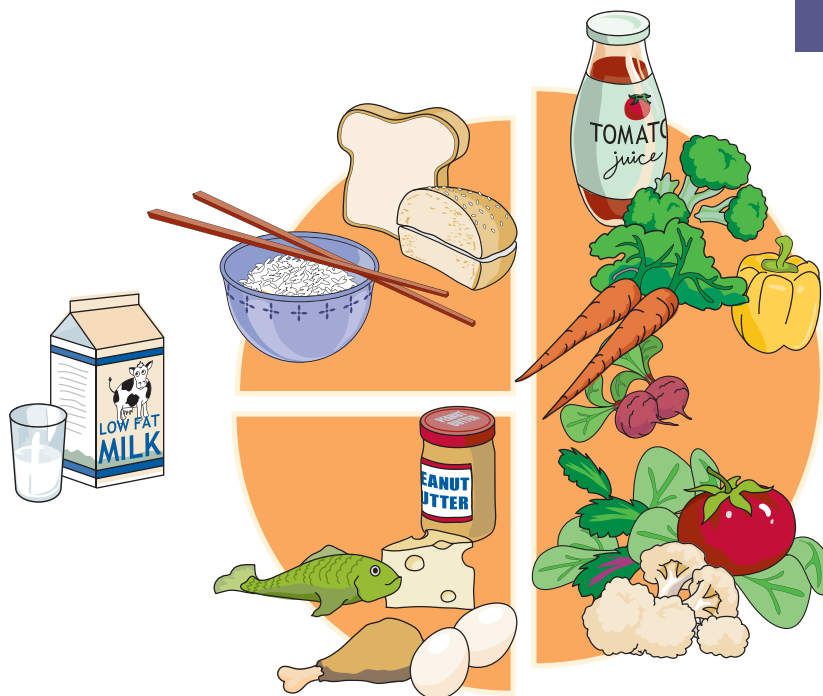
You need fat in your daily diet. The key is choosing healthier fats:

- Most often, choose monounsaturated fats. Olive, canola, and peanut oil are in this category.
- Less often, choose polyunsaturated fats like corn, sesame, and safflower oil. Salmon and tuna are also healthy sources.
- Limit saturated fat. High-fat meat and dairy products have a lot of saturated fat, as do tropical oils like coconut and palm oil.

### FOOD WISE

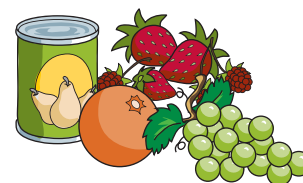
There's no such thing as a "wrong" or "bad" food. You just need to **choose foods wisely**. This means balancing your choices throughout the day and considering other parts of your management plan, such as exercise and medication. A good meal plan can help you do this.

- Avoid trans fat. This harmful fat is found in foods containing hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil. (Read the label!)



### ◀ EAT A VARIETY OF FOODS

This helps make sure you get all the nutrients you need. So every day, choose from a range of foods: vegetables, fruits, protein-rich foods like fish or eggs, dairy products, and grains.



## 6 basic nutritional building blocks:



### Choose heart-healthy proteins

Don't rely on high-fat meats for all your protein:

- Include more beans and peas in your meals. They're a great source of fiber as well as protein.
- Add soy products to your diet. Soy milk and soybeans (edamame, tofu) give you protein and help balance your cholesterol.
- Eat fish and shellfish 2-3 times each week.
- Go for skinless, white-meat chicken and turkey.
- Choose lean cuts of red meat—and keep your servings about the size of a deck of cards.
- Snack on nuts a few times each week. Some good options are almonds, peanuts, and walnuts.



### Select low-fat dairy products

Dairy products are good sources of calcium, protein, and vitamins. To get these benefits—without the fat and cholesterol:

- Buy low-fat, skim, or fat-free milk.
- Choose low-fat cheese and yogurt.
- If you're lactose-intolerant, choose soy milk or lactose-free milk. (Pick a soy milk that's fortified with calcium.)



### Limit your sodium, sugar and alcohol intake

For better health, most Americans—not just people with diabetes—need to limit sodium, sugar, and alcohol:

- Keep sodium to 2,400 mg a day or less. Lose the saltshaker and cut down on packaged foods. Buy low-sodium brands of soup, crackers, and so on.
- Except for an occasional treat, skip foods and drinks with added sugar. For example, drink water instead of soda or sports drinks.
- If you don't drink alcohol, don't start. If you do, talk to your doctor or diabetes educator about how to fit alcohol into your meal plan. Always limit your daily intake to one drink (for women) or two (for men).

## Control your portions

When and what you eat is important—and so is how much you eat. Your meal plan may have targets for several different measures. For example, your plan may include recommendations for daily calories, number of servings, or grams of certain nutrients at each snack and meal time. But the best way to hit these targets—without having to crunch numbers—is simply to control your portions.

### Why pay attention to portions?

Here's why you need to start paying more attention to your portions:

- **To regulate your carbohydrate intake.**

The only way to be consistent in your eating patterns is to use consistent portion sizes as your frame of reference. After all, in terms of carbohydrates, a big plate of pasta is not the same as a couple of noodles! You need to be aware of this as you make choices throughout the day.

- **To help manage your weight.** Eating too much food—even very nutritious food—makes it harder to control your blood glucose. It also makes it harder for you to maintain a healthy weight. Maintaining a healthy weight is important for people with diabetes, especially people with type 2 diabetes. Excess body fat hinders your body's ability to make and use your own insulin.

- **To promote variety in your diet.** You ate every bite of a big, juicy steak—and now you're too full to even look at your side dish of vegetables. Sound familiar? Eating smaller portions will make it easier for you to have variety in your diet—without too many calories.

### What's the right amount?

How much you should eat—at one sitting, or in your whole day—depends on several factors. It depends on how active you are, and on your age, height, weight, and gender. It also depends on the type of food you plan to eat, and the time you plan to eat it. If this sounds complicated, don't worry. Your dietitian can help you set targets for how much of various foods you should eat.





### *“Right-size” versus “super-size”*

Research shows that most people will eat what's put in front of them—regardless of how hungry they actually are or how big a portion should be. The more we're served, the more we eat. And unfortunately, most Americans are used to “super-sized” servings.





## h o w t o control your portion sizes

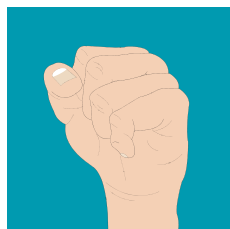
One of the best things you can do to control your portions is to simply pay attention to them—and to how your body feels as you eat. Beyond that, you might find it helpful to check your portions against some outside measure. Once you get used to how big various portions are, you won't need to keep checking.

-  **Measure or weigh it.** Get a set of measuring cups and spoons, and leave them out on the kitchen counter where you can easily see and use them. Some people find that food scales—which show ounces, grams, or both—are also useful.
-  **Eat slowly—and stop before you feel full.** Your stomach is only about the size of your fist. It doesn't take much food to fill it up. But unfortunately, it takes a while for the “I'm full” signal to reach your brain. By the time it does, you've already eaten too much. So don't stop eating when you feel full—stop when you're no longer hungry.
-  **Read the label.** You might be surprised at the portion sizes of some packaged foods. Read labels carefully to make sure you're eating only one serving at a sitting.
-  **Develop “hand-eye coordination.”** You can use your hand to estimate portion sizes. See the pictures below.

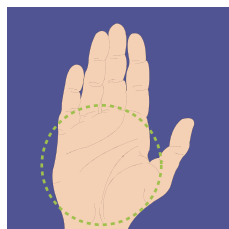
### COUNT MY CARBOHYDRATES?

To help you gain even tighter control over your blood glucose levels, your doctor or diabetes educator may recommend that you count the number of carbohydrates you eat.

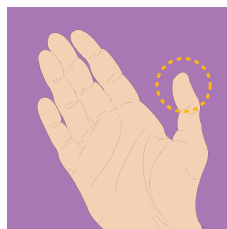
-  **Who does it?** Carbohydrate counting is helpful for anyone who wants to better control their blood glucose by regulating their food intake. It's particularly useful for people who take insulin to help control their diabetes. It helps them balance the amount of insulin they inject with the number of carbohydrates they eat.
-  **How is it done?** This technique requires some instruction from a registered dietitian (an RD). An RD can help you determine the number of carbohydrates you need each day, and how to distribute them throughout your meals and snacks. Your healthcare provider can refer you to a dietitian near you.



▲  
**fist =  
1 cup**



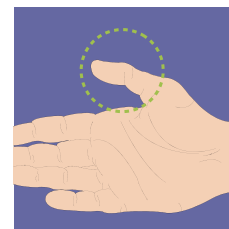
▲  
**palm =  
3 ounces**



▲  
**thumb tip =  
1 teaspoon**



▲  
**handful =  
1-2 ounces**



▲  
**thumb =  
1 ounce**