



Diabetes Meal Planning

Eating and Diabetes

You can take good care of yourself and your diabetes by learning:

- what to eat
- how much to eat
- when to eat

Making wise food choices can help you:

- feel good every day
- lose weight if you need to
- lower your risk for heart disease, stroke and other problems caused by diabetes

Healthful eating helps keep your blood glucose in your target range. Physical activity and, if needed, diabetes medicines also help. The diabetes target range is the blood glucose level suggested by diabetes experts for good health. You can help prevent health problems by keeping your blood glucose levels on target.

What should your blood glucose levels be?

Target Blood Glucose Levels for People With Diabetes	
Before meals	70 to 130 mg/dL
1 to 2 hours after the start of a meal	less than 180 mg/dL
A1C	7% or less

How can you keep your blood glucose levels on target?

You can keep your blood glucose levels on target by:

- making wise food choices
- being physically active
- taking medicines if needed

For people taking certain diabetes medicines, following a schedule for meals, snacks and physical activity is best. However, some diabetes medicines allow for more flexibility. Your health care team can help you create a diabetes plan that's best for you.

Talk with your doctor or diabetes teacher about how many meals and snacks to eat each day. A good rule of thumb is three meals and two to three snacks daily. It is a good idea to eat about the same types and amounts of food at about the same times every day.

How much should you eat each day?

Have about **1,200 to 1,600 calories** a day if you are a:

- small woman who exercises
- small or medium-sized woman who wants to lose weight
- medium-sized woman who does not exercise much

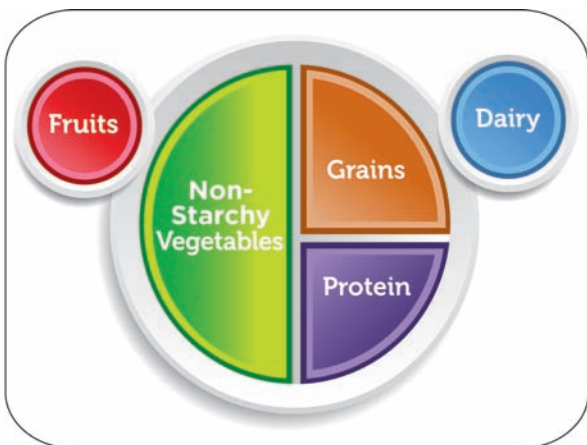
Have about **1,600 to 2,000 calories** a day if you are a:

- large woman who wants to lose weight
- small man at a healthy weight
- medium-sized man who does not exercise much
- medium-sized or large man who wants to lose weight

How much carbohydrate should you have each day?

<i>Carb choices per meal</i>	Carb choices	Carbohydrate grams
Inactive women	2 - 4	30g – 60g
Active women/inactive men	3 - 5	45g – 75g
Active men	4 - 6	60g – 90g
<i>Carb choices per snack</i>		
Between meal	1 – 2	15g – 30g

The Diabetes Plate



The Diabetes Plate can help you make wise food choices. It divides foods into groups, based on their nutrient content. Foods from the grains/starches, fruits, vegetables and milk groups are highest in carbohydrate. They affect your blood glucose levels the most.

Try these simple steps to get started:

Using a small (9-inch) plate, draw an imaginary line down the middle of the plate. Then on one side, draw a line cutting it in half so you have three sections on your plate – a half and two fourths.

Fill the largest section with non-starchy vegetables such as:

- | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|-----------------|----------|
| spinach | carrots | lettuce | greens | cabbage |
| okra | broccoli | cauliflower | tomatoes | peppers |
| salsa | beets | onion | turnip | cucumber |
| mushrooms | bok choy | green beans | vegetable juice | |

In one of the small sections, put starchy foods such as:

- whole grain breads like whole wheat or rye
- whole grain, high-fiber cereal
- cooked cereal such as oatmeal, grits, hominy or cream of wheat
- rice, pasta, tortillas
- cooked beans and peas such as pinto beans or black-eyed peas
- potatoes, green peas, corn, lima beans, sweet potatoes, winter squash
- low-fat crackers and snack chips, pretzels and fat-free popcorn

In the other small section, put meat or meat substitutes such as:

- chicken or turkey without the skin
- fish such as tuna, salmon, cod or catfish
- other seafood such as shrimp, clams, oysters, crab or mussels
- lean cuts of beef and pork such as sirloin or pork loin
- tofu, eggs, low-fat cheese

Add an 8-ounce glass of non-fat or low-fat milk. If you don't drink milk, you can add another small serving of carbohydrate such as a 6-ounce container of light yogurt or a small roll.

Add a small piece of fruit or ½ cup of cut-up fruit (fresh, frozen or canned in its own juice) and you have your meal planned. Choose your favorite fresh fruit, or choose frozen or canned fruit without added sugar.

Add a small amount of margarine or oil for preparation or addition at the table. Add other portions as recommended by your diabetes team to round out your meal plan.

Why does the Diabetes Plate work for people with diabetes?

When we eat food, it is broken down to nutrients that our bodies can use. Carbohydrates in food are broken down to a sugar called glucose that enters our blood and is carried throughout our bodies to provide energy to all of our cells. Normally, our bodies produce insulin, a hormone that is needed for the glucose to get into our cells. People with diabetes either do not make insulin or their bodies do not use insulin well. Without insulin, glucose builds up in the blood which can cause serious complications.

A diet that contains just the right amount of carbohydrate is important for managing diabetes. Using the Diabetes Plate to plan meals can help people with type 2 diabetes get the right amount of carbohydrate in their diet. People with type 1 diabetes may need to more carefully monitor their carbohydrate intake.

In general, the following provide 15 grams of carbohydrate per serving:

- ½ cup of fresh, canned or frozen fruit or juice
- ⅓ - ½ cup of cooked rice, cereal, pasta or other grain
- 1 slice of regular bread, tortilla or small roll
- 1 cup of milk or 6 ounces of unsweetened yogurt
- ½ cup starchy vegetable
- 1½ cups of non-starchy vegetables

Your doctor will tell you how many servings of carbohydrate foods you should have in a day or at each meal. If you follow the Diabetes Plate you will get about four servings of carbohydrate foods or 60 grams of carbohydrate per meal. Using smaller plates, bowls and drinking glasses helps keep portion sizes in check. Try using a 9-inch plate, small soup bowls that just hold 1 cup, small side dishes that look full when they hold ½ cup of food and 8-ounce drinking glasses.






Measuring Your Food

It is a good idea to measure your foods periodically to make sure your food servings are the right size. You can use:

- measuring cups
- measuring spoons
- a food scale

Or you can use the following guide. Also, the Nutrition Facts label on food packages tells you how much of the food is in one serving.

Guide to Sensible Serving Sizes

This much	is the same as
	3 ounces 1 serving of meat, chicken, turkey or fish
	1 cup 1 serving of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cooked vegetables• leafy salads• casseroles or stews such as chili with beans• milk
	1/2 cup 1 serving of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fruit or fruit juice• starchy vegetables such as potatoes or corn• pinto beans and other dried beans• rice or noodles• cereal
	1 ounce 1 serving of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• snack food• cheese (1 slice)
	1 tablespoon 1 serving of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• salad dressing• cream cheese

Fats and Sweets

Limit the amount of fats and sweets you eat. Fats and sweets are not as nutritious as other foods. Fats have a lot of calories. Sweets can be high in carbohydrates and fat. Some contain saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol that increase your risk of heart disease. Limiting these foods will help you lose weight and keep your blood glucose and blood fats under control.

Remember, fat-free and low-sugar foods still have calories. Talk with your diabetes teacher about how to fit sweets into your meal plan.

Adapted from NIH Publication No. 08-5043. Updated November 27, 2012. Accessed May 31, 2013.