

Getting started: healthy eating and diabetes

Glucose comes from foods that contain carbohydrates such as fruit, milk, some vegetables, starchy foods and sweet foods like honey, candy and desserts. Healthy eating and physical activity help to manage your blood sugar. You may also need to take pills, insulin and/or other medications.



All bodies need energy in the form of sugar called glucose. Insulin is a hormone that helps our bodies take this glucose and use it for energy. Without insulin, glucose builds up and causes high blood sugar.

Here are some basic tips to help you get started

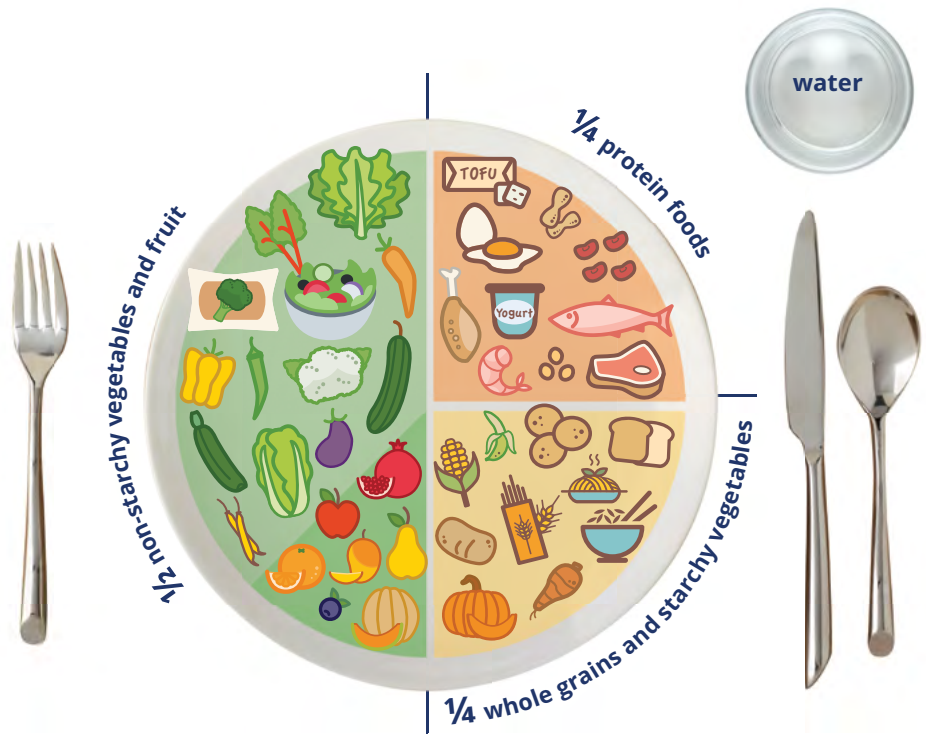
Tips:	Reasons:
Eat a meal or snack every 4-6 hours to ensure you are getting enough energy and nutrients.	Eating at regular times helps manage blood sugar levels.
Eat more high-fibre foods such as whole grains, breads and cereals made with whole grains, beans, peas, lentils, vegetables and fruit.	Foods high in fibre will keep you full longer, lower the impact of carbohydrates on your blood sugar and support overall health.
Eat a balanced breakfast that includes both carbohydrates and protein.	Helps to prevent blood sugar highs and lows
Prepare more meals at home.	Preparing meals gives you more control over how much sugar, salt and added fats you eat.
Limit sugars and sweets such as sugar sweetened drinks, desserts, candies, jam and honey.	Increased intake of sugar increases blood sugar levels.
Choose healthy fats such as olive, canola or vegetable oils in small quantities.	Replacing saturated fats and processed foods high in saturated fats with unsaturated fats helps reduce heart disease risk.
Choose water more often as your drink of choice.	Plain water has no carbohydrates or sugars and will not add to your carbohydrate intake.
Add physical activity to your day.	Regular aerobic and resistance exercise improves blood sugar and is good for overall well-being.
Limit alcohol consumption.	Alcohol can affect blood sugar levels and provides calories but no nutrients.



Diabetes Canada recommends that all people living with diabetes should receive advice on nutrition from a registered dietitian. It's natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you include your favourite foods in a personalized healthy eating plan.

Plan for healthy eating

The balanced plate approach applies to all mealtimes, even if you use a bowl! The balanced plate is designed to help you meet your nutrient needs and manage your blood sugar.



Healthy eating tips

- ✓ Eat more vegetables. They are very high in nutrients and fibre and low in carbohydrates.
- ✓ Choose lean animal proteins such as skinless chicken, pork, extra lean beef and fish. Select vegetable proteins such as tofu, edamame, beans and lentils more often.
- ✓ Select heart healthy fats such as olive oil, canola oil, vegetable oils, avocado and nuts and seeds instead of animal fats.
- ✓ Learn more about low-glycemic-index foods such as legumes, whole grains, fruits and vegetables and how to include them in your eating pattern.
- ✓ Eat together as a family more often to model healthy eating behaviours to children and teenagers.
- ✓ Consider learning about counting carbohydrates, and different types of eating patterns (e.g. Mediterranean, DASH).
- ✓ If you are planning on fasting, talk to your health-care team 1 to 2 months in advance.

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:



Fruits/Grains & Starches Choose an amount the size of your fist for grains or starches, or fruit.



Vegetables Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose brightly coloured vegetables.



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



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

Increase your physical activity

- Make time for physical activity into your daily routine. Even small amounts of movement add up throughout the day.
- Try to be active most days of the week. Start with a few days and work your way up to daily.
- Slowly increase the amount of effort; for instance, progress from strolling to brisk walking.
- Try new activities like dancing or basketball and make family time active.
- Reflect on how moving your body makes you feel. Many people sleep better, experience reduced stress or have improved energy.



Sample meal plan 1

Breakfast:

- Scrambled eggs (2)
- Sauteed vegetables-peppers, onion, cabbage, spinach (1 cup, 250 mL)
- Whole wheat toast (2) or tortillas (2x6")
- Reduced sugar Greek yogurt (1 container, 95 g)
- Tea or coffee

Lunch:

- Lentil or bean vegetable soup (2 cups)
- Raw, non-starchy vegetables (1 cup, 250 mL)
- Hummus (1/4 cup, 60 mL)
- 1% or skim milk or alternative (1 cup, 250 mL)
- 1 small mango

Dinner:

- 2 whole grain roti or flat bread (6" round)
- Chicken, fish or lentil curry (1 cup, 250 mL)
- Side salad (1 cup, 250 mL) + dressing (1 Tbsp, 15 mL)
- 1% or skim milk or soy alternative (1 cup, 250 mL)
- Cantaloupe (1 cup, 250 mL)

Evening Snack:

- Roasted, unsalted peanuts (1/4 cup, 60 mL)
- 1 small banana

Additional tips

- ✓ Include a protein, carbohydrate/starch and a fruit or vegetables at every meal.
- ✓ Listen to your body's cues for hunger and fullness.
- ✓ Include high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads, cereals, and pastas, fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- ✓ Move your body in a way you enjoy every day.



Sample meal plan 2

Breakfast:

- Old fashioned oatmeal or porridge (3/4 cup, 175 mL)
- Almonds, roasted, unsalted (1/4 cup, 60 mL)
- Frozen blueberries, thawed (1 cup, 250 mL)
- 0% or 2% Greek yogurt (3/4 cup, 175 mL)
- Tea or coffee

Lunch:

- Tuna, packed in water (85 g or 1/2 tin)
- 2 slices whole grain bread or 6" pita
- Reduced fat mayonnaise (1 Tbsp, 15 mL)
- Tomato slices
- Greek Lentil Salad (1 1/2 cups, 375 mL)
- Watermelon (1 cup, 250 mL)

Afternoon Snack:

- Apple (1 medium)
- Cheddar cheese (1 oz, 30 g)

Dinner:

- Brown rice, cooked (2/3 cup, 150 mL)
- Stir-fried broccoli (1 cup, 250 mL) with beef or salmon (4 oz, 120 g)
- Sautéed spinach with garlic (1 cup, 250 mL)
- 1 orange
- 1% or skim milk or soy alternative (1 cup, 250 mL)

Evening Snack:

- Air-popped popcorn (3 cups, 750 mL)
- Pumpkin seeds, unsalted (1/4 cup, 60 mL)

Notes:

For additional nutrition and fitness information, visit diabetes.ca