

Living happily and healthily with diabetes

Eat, move, monitor!

Living with diabetes is a chance to do more, not less

If you follow the recommendations for healthy living, you can manage your diabetes extremely well. You can prevent, delay, or minimize the complications associated with diabetes.

As you read this, you're actually taking one of the most important steps you can possibly take: *learning more about diabetes*. Your knowledge gives you tremendous power over the disease.

Here are three areas, with some tips for each area to help manage diabetes:¹

Eat¹

- Try the Diabetes Plate Method (see example on back)
- Split desserts with friends and family
- Avoid buffets
- Start your meal with broth-based soup or a salad
- Try new sodium-free herbs and spices
- Drink more water

Move¹

- Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 5 days a week (or at least three 10-minute bouts of activity during the day)
- Strength exercises 2x a week
- Stretch as often as you can
- Balance exercises 3 or more days a week
- Start slow and build up
- Check with your healthcare provider before starting or increasing your exercise

Monitor¹

- Track your glucose numbers
- Weigh yourself
- Take your prescribed diabetes medication
- Check your feet for any cuts, redness or blisters
- See a dentist for an exam and cleaning every six months
- Get eye exams annually
- Get annual cancer screenings

We understand that changing your eating habits can be difficult. So, let's take a closer look at food planning. Remember, there's no "one size fits all" diabetes diet.¹ You have a lot of flexibility in what you eat, and can even include your favorite foods on the menu. This is one example of "the Diabetes Plate Method" for planning healthy meals. This method helps you control portion sizes of starchy and carbohydrate-containing foods that have the most impact on blood glucose levels. It focuses on eating more nonstarchy vegetables, which are low in carbohydrate and calories and high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. It also helps you get enough lean protein.²

Diabetes Plate Method²

For the plate method, your food can be piled to about the thickness of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand.

Grains and starchy vegetables²

- Whole grain breads or crackers
- Whole grain, high-fiber cereal
- Oatmeal, grits, hominy, or cream of wheat
- Rice, pasta, tortillas
- Cooked beans and peas
- Potatoes, corn, winter squash

Protein²

- Chicken or turkey (without the skin)
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Lean cuts of beef and pork such as sirloin or pork loin
- Tofu, eggs, low-fat cheese

Milk²

- Skim, 1/2%, or 1% milk
- Low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- Plain soy milk

Fruit²

- Fresh, frozen, or canned in juice or light syrup

Non-starchy vegetables²

- Fresh, frozen, or canned carrots, leafy greens, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, tomatoes, vegetable juice, salsa, onion, cucumber, beets, okra, mushroom, peppers, turnip

The American Diabetes Association recommends that you focus on filling half your plate with nonstarchy vegetables. Then fill one quarter of your plate with whole grain or starchy foods and the other quarter of your plate with lean protein foods. Consider fruit and low-fat dairy items on the side, as your meal plan and calorie needs allow.¹ The ChooseMyPlate.gov website includes a number of other useful printable materials and resources.³

It's a good idea to review your food plan with your healthcare provider. For example, if you have kidney disease, your healthcare provider may want you to eat less protein. Also review your exercise regimen. If your blood glucose levels are not yet well managed, your doctor may want you to avoid certain kinds of workouts. You may need extra screenings and assessments in addition to your regular preventive exams. *Be sure to keep all appointments for exam.*

1. <https://www.diabetes.org/diabetes>, accessed on March 22, 2021

2. <https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/articles/what-is-the-diabetes-plate-method.html#:~:text=The%20Diabetes%20Method%20is,you%20need%20is%20a%20plate!>, accessed on March 22, 2021

3. USDA, "choose My Plate," accessed at ChooseMyPlate.gov, May 2020

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