

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.

By reading 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 things you can do to help manage your diabetes:

Eat

- Try the Diabetes Plate Method (see page 2)
- 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

Move

- Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise five days a week, or at least three 10-minute bouts of activity during the day
- Strength exercises two times per week
- Stretch as often as you can
- Balance exercises three or more days a week
- Start slow and build up
- Check with your healthcare provider before starting or increasing your exercise

Monitor

- 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

Diabetes Plate Method¹

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 "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 non-starchy vegetables, which are low in carbohydrate and calories and high in vitamins, minerals and fiber. It also helps you get enough lean protein.² Using this 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 or tortillas
- Cooked beans and peas
- Potatoes, corn or 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 or low-fat cheese

Fruit²

- Fresh, frozen or canned in juice or light syrup

Milk²

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

Non-starchy vegetables²

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

Focus on filling half your plate with non-starchy vegetables. Then fill one quarter of your plate with lean protein and the other quarter of your plate with carb foods, which include whole grains or starchy vegetables. A cup of milk also counts as a carb food. Then choose water or a low-calorie drink, such as unsweetened iced tea, to go with your meal. MyPlate.gov includes a number of other useful printable materials and resources.²

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.

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes Meal Planning, March 11, 2021. Available from www.cdc.org.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture. My Plate, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. Available from www.MyPlate.gov.

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