

*A healthy diet  
is important for  
managing your  
blood sugar.*

## **Diabetes Meal Planning: Getting Started**

This information provides tips on how to start making your meal plan healthier. While all foods may affect your blood sugar, carbohydrates (CHOs) may have the biggest impact. A **Consistent Carbohydrate Diet** can help control your blood sugar. This means that you eat the same amount of CHOs at each meal. Your doctor may suggest that a dietitian help you select the number of CHOs that are right for you based on your blood sugar, weight and activity level.

### **What Are CHOs?**

CHOs are the foods we use for energy. Examples of healthy CHOs are:

- Milk (low-fat milk, yogurt).
- Starches (whole grain bread, rice, pasta).
- Fruit (apples, grapes, oranges).
- Starchy vegetables (winter squash, potatoes, corn, peas).

### **How Can I Create a Healthy Menu?**

#### ***Basic Guidelines***

Here are some basic guidelines that will help you control your blood sugar.

#### **Eat 3 meals a day:**

- Plan to eat your meals at about the same time each day.
- Do not skip meals.
- Make sure you eat a variety of foods (fruits, vegetables, etc.).

**Know how to snack:**

- If you take insulin, be sure to have a bedtime snack.
- If your meals are more than 5 hours apart, have a small snack.
- Snacks ideas: 2 to 3 graham cracker squares with peanut butter; ½ turkey sandwich; or ¼ cup cottage cheese with ½ banana.

**Watch portion sizes:**

- Even healthy foods will cause high blood sugar if you eat too much.
- Make sure each of your meals has the same amount of CHOs.

**Avoid foods high in sugar:**

- Some foods to avoid: sugar, honey, candies, syrup, cakes, cookies, regular soda and fruit drinks.
- Canned fruit in light or heavy syrup.

**Reach and Maintain a Healthy Body Weight:**

- A healthy weight improves blood sugar levels.
- Activity helps your body improve blood sugar levels.
- Try to get in 30 minutes each day, even 10 minutes at 3 different times.
- Excess fat from animal products, including butter, bacon, mayonnaise, cheese and creamy salad dressings, should be avoided. Avoid fried foods.

Know the sugar-free foods that also are very low in calories (less than 20 calories per serving).

These are called “free foods” and have little effect on your blood sugar:

- Diet soda
- No-added-sugar jellies
- Spices
- Coffee
- Sugar-free gelatin
- Sugar-free gum
- Sugar substitutes
- Tea

Note: If you are pregnant, do not use saccharine. All other sugar substitutes (alone or in other foods) should be used in moderation.

**Just a few other notes:**

Fat-free foods: are not sugar free, and often have additional sugar added.

Sugar alcohols: such as sorbitol and mannitol are sugar substitutes found in sugar-free foods. These foods should be limited because they will increase your blood sugar, and in excess may cause gastrointestinal distress.

## Balancing Your Diet

To plan your meals, it is important to know the serving size or the amount of food to eat.

### *Carbohydrates*

**Starch: Include 2 to 3 servings per meal, or 6 to 11 servings per day.**

The following is 1 serving:

½ cup cooked or ready-to-eat cereal; cooked grain or starchy vegetable.

⅓ cup cooked rice or pasta.

1 oz. of a bread product.

¾ to 1 oz. most snack foods.

See chart on page 6 for examples.

**Fruits: Include 1 with each meal, or 2 to 4 per day.**

The following is 1 serving:

- 1 small medium fresh fruit.
  - ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit (canned in juice, not syrup).
  - ½ cup 100% fruit juice.
  - ¼ cup dried fruit.

See chart on page 6 for examples.

**Milk: Include 1 serving with each meal, or 2 to 3 servings per day or 3 to 4 servings if you are pregnant.**

The following is 1 serving:

- 1 cup milk.
- ¾ cup plain, sugar-free yogurt.

### *Other Food Groups*

#### **Nonstarchy Vegetables**

See chart on page 7 for examples.

**Include 1 to 2 servings per meal, or 3 to 5 servings per day.**

The following is 1 serving:

- 1 cup raw vegetables.
- ½ cup cooked vegetables, tomato juice or vegetable juice.

## **Meat and Meat Substitutes**

**Include 4 to 6 oz. per day, or 6 to 8 oz. if you are pregnant.**

The following is 1 serving:

- 1 oz. cooked chicken, turkey, fish, beef, pork, lamb.
- 1 slice cheese.
- ¼ cup cottage cheese.
- ½ cup tofu.
- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter.
- 1 egg.

Note: If you are pregnant, be sure to heat all deli-type meats before eating. This will help prevent an infection due to listeria, which may cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or infection of the newborn.

## **Fats**

**Limit to 3 to 5 servings a day.**

The following is 1 serving:

- 1 tsp. margarine, butter, mayonnaise or oil.
- 1 Tbsp. reduced fat margarine, reduced fat mayonnaise, salad dressing, cream cheese, half-and-half cream or seeds (sesame, pumpkin, sunflower).
- 1 Tbsp. nuts.
- 1½ Tbsp. reduced fat cream cheese.
- 2 Tbsp. fat-free salad dressing, sour cream.
- 1 slice bacon.
- ⅛ avocado.

## A Menu Example:

| Breakfast             | Lunch                              | Dinner                 | Snack                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ½ cup oatmeal         | 2 slices whole wheat bread         | 3 oz. baked chicken    | 3 cups air-popped popcorn  |
| ½ banana              | 2 oz. sliced turkey                | ¾ cup brown rice       | 8 oz. sugar-free hot cocoa |
| 1 cup skim milk       | 1 Tbsp. reduced calorie mayonnaise | ½ cup cooked broccoli  |                            |
| 1 Tbsp. peanut butter | 1 cup carrot sticks                | 1 cup salad            |                            |
|                       | 1 small apple                      | 1 Tbsp. salad dressing |                            |
|                       |                                    | 1 cup raspberries      |                            |

These are general guidelines. To tailor your diet to your specific needs, arrange to meet with an outpatient dietitian by calling the Center for Integrative Medicine and Wellness. They can assist you to arrange a personalized consultation at 312-926-WELL (9355).

To control your blood sugar is it is also important to:

- Take medicines as prescribed.
- Do routine blood sugar checks.
- Exercise.
- Follow your doctor's guidelines.

## Servings for Carbohydrate Foods

| Starch   | Other Starches  | Fruit  | Milk                                  |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 slice bread  | ½ cup casserole/<br>lasagna/macaroni<br>and cheese/spaghetti<br>with meat sauce | 1 small fresh fruit<br>(tennis ball size)      | 1 cup fat free or<br>reduced fat milk |
| 6-inch tortilla  | 1 cup broth-based<br>soup   | ½ cup unsweetened<br>applesauce                | 1 cup<br>unsweetened<br>soy milk      |
| ½ English muffin,<br>hamburger/hotdog<br>small pita (1 oz.)    | ½ cup cream-based<br>soup or chili  | ½ cup canned fruit<br>in own juice or<br>water | 1 cup buttermilk                      |
| ¼ bagel (1 oz.)  | 1 Tbsp sugar/syrup/<br>jam/jelly/honey  | ½ banana (4-inch<br>length)                    | 1 cup Lactaid™<br>milk                |
| 1 waffle or pancake<br>(4 inch diameter,<br>¼ thick)           | 2 Tbsp light syrup  | ¾ cup blueberries/<br>blackberries             | 1 cup kefir                           |
| ¾ cup unsweetened,<br>dry cereal                               | 2 inch square<br>cake or brownie,<br>unfrosted                                  | 1¼ cup strawberries                            | 1 cup plain<br>yogurt                 |
| ½ cup sweetened<br>bran cereal                                 | 2 small cookies   | ⅓ cantaloupe or<br>honeydew<br>(1 cup cut)     | 6 oz. light or fat<br>free yogurt     |
| ½ cup cooked cereal<br>(oatmeal, grits, kashi,<br>bulgar)      | ½ cup ice cream/<br>gelatin/frozen<br>yogurt                                    | 1 wedge<br>watermelon<br>(1 inch thick)        |                                       |
| ⅓ cup cooked pasta,<br>rice, couscous                          | ¾ cup pudding/<br>sherbet/sorbet  | 17 medium grapes                               |                                       |
| 4 to 6 crackers  | ½ cup sugar-free<br>pudding   | ½ small papaya                                 |                                       |
| ¾ oz. (15 to 20)<br>pretzels, snack chips<br>(fat-free, baked) |   | ½ grapefruit (large)                           |                                       |
| 3 cups light popcorn   |   | 2 Tbsp raisins or<br>“craisins”                |                                       |
| 3 Tbsp flour (dry)   |   | ¼ cup dried fruit<br>pieces                    |                                       |
| ¾ large baked potato<br>(3 oz.)                                |   | 3 dried plums/<br>dates/figs                   |                                       |
| ½ cup corn, green<br>peas; cooked beans,<br>peas, lentils      |   | ½ cup unsweetened<br>juice                     |                                       |
| ½ cup potato, sweet<br>potato                                  |   | ⅓ cup prune, grape<br>or cranberry juice       |                                       |
| ⅓ cup baked beans,<br>refried beans                            |   |  |                                       |

## Servings for Other Food Groups

| Non-starchy Vegetables  | Protein  | Fats   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>½ cup cooked vegetables<br/>1 cup raw vegetables<br/>½ cup tomato or vegetable juice<br/>See shopping guide for list of non-starchy vegetables.<br/><i>1 serving = 5 grams CHO</i></p>   | <p>1 oz. lean meat, fish, poultry, or shellfish<br/>¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese/1 oz. low-fat cheese<br/>1 egg or ¼ cup egg substitute<br/>¼ cup nuts/1 Tbsp peanut butter<br/>½ cup tofu<br/><i>1 serving = 7 grams protein</i></p>  | <p>1 tsp margarine/butter/oil<br/>1 Tbsp reduced fat margarine/butter/mayo/cream cheese<br/>2 Tbsp reduced fat sour cream/salad dressing/half and half<br/>¼ cup avocado<br/>1 Tbsp nuts (6 to 7 nuts)<br/>10 olives<br/>1 Tbsp sesame/sunflower seeds<br/><i>1 serving = 5 grams of fat</i></p> |
| Free Foods (less than 20 calories)  | Foods to Limit to 3 Servings per Day   |  |
| <p>Coffee or tea (unsweetened, no cream or milk)<br/>Sugar substitutes<br/>Diet soft drinks, club soda, diet tonic water, sugar-free mineral water, sparkling water,<br/>Low sodium bouillon and broth<br/>Lemon and lime juice<br/>Herbs and spices<br/>Mustard<br/>Low sodium soy sauce<br/>Vinegar<br/>Cooking wine<br/>Worcestershire sauce<br/>Raw cabbage, celery, radishes, green onions, zucchini, mushrooms, lettuce, cucumbers<br/>Salsa<br/>Sugar-free gelatin, popsicles and gum<br/>Fat-free whipped topping</p> | <p>Fat-free cream cheese<br/>Nondairy creamer<br/>Fat-free mayonnaise<br/>Fat-free margarine<br/>Fat-free salad dressing<br/>Fat-free or reduced fat sour cream<br/>Regular or light whipped topping<br/>Sugar-free hard candy<br/>Low sugar or light jam or jelly<br/>Sugar-free syrup<br/>Unsweetened cocoa powder<br/>Catsup<br/>Pickles<br/>Taco sauce<br/>Diet V8™ “Splash” drink</p> |  |

## Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to [hlc@nmh.org](mailto:hlc@nmh.org).

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.*

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