

*A healthy meal plan is important for managing your blood glucose.*

## Diabetes Meal Planning: Getting Started

A diabetes meal plan includes eating a variety of nutritious foods in moderate amounts and at regular meal times. This healthy meal plan is low in calories and high in healthy nutrients. Healthy food choices should include vegetables, fruits, lean protein and whole grains.

If you have diabetes or are at risk of getting diabetes, it is important to manage the calories and carbohydrate (CHO) in your meals to prevent a high blood sugar (glucose) level. Over time, high blood glucose levels can lead to problems such as kidney, heart and nerve damage.

To get started, this brochure will explain what you need to know about:

- Creating a healthy diabetes meal plan
- Foods you should limit
- Food portion choices
- Reading food labels

You should meet with a registered dietitian to make a meal plan that is right for you. The dietitian can guide and teach you about how you can manage your blood glucose level and your weight with your eating plan.

### Creating a healthy diabetes meal plan

Here are some basic guidelines that will help you manage your blood glucose.

#### ***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, protein, whole grains, dairy).
- If your meals are more than 5 hours apart, have a small snack.

#### ***Reach and maintain a healthy body weight:***

- A healthy weight improves glucose sugar levels.
- Count your calories and carbohydrates each day. Use a website such as [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com) to do this.
- Activity helps your body improve blood glucose levels.
- Try to get in 30 minutes each day, even 10 minutes at 3 different times.

### ***Manage your blood sugar:***

- Take medicines as prescribed.
- Eat 3 meals a day and planned snacks.
- Count your calories and carbohydrates daily.
- Do routine blood glucose checks.
- Exercise.
- Follow your healthcare provider's guidelines.

### ***Enjoy healthy carbohydrates***

While all foods can affect your blood glucose, carbohydrates (CHOs) may have the biggest impact. A **Consistent Carbohydrate Meal Plan** can help manage your blood glucose. This means that you eat the same amount of CHOs at each meal. Examples of healthy CHOs are:

- Starches (whole grain bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta)
- Beans (lentils, chickpeas)
- Starchy vegetables (winter squash, potatoes, corn, peas)
- Fruit (apples, grapes, oranges)
- Low-fat dairy products (low-fat milk; light, flavored yogurt)

### **Foods to limit**

Over time, high blood glucose levels can damage your heart and blood vessels. Some foods can also increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Avoid foods that are high-calorie and/or high in unhealthy fats such as:

- Foods high in saturated fats (high-fat meats, such as beef, hot dogs, deli meats, sausage, bacon)
- Foods with excess fat from animal products (butter, bacon, mayonnaise, cheese, creamy salad dressings, fried foods)
- Foods with trans fats (margarine, bakery foods, processed foods)
- Processed foods and added salt (sodium) in your meals
- Foods high in sugar:
  - Flavored yogurt
  - Ice cream
  - Juice
  - Dried fruit
  - Syrup-packed canned fruit
  - Fruit spread (jams, jellies)
  - Bakery goods (cookies, cake, pastry)
  - Candy
  - Crackers
  - Sugar-sweetened cereals

- Sweetened drinks (soft drinks, sweetened drink mixes, Kool-Aid®)
- Sweeteners (sugar, honey, molasses, syrup)
- Before choosing to drink alcohol, discuss it with your healthcare provider.

## Food portion choices

### Watch portion sizes:

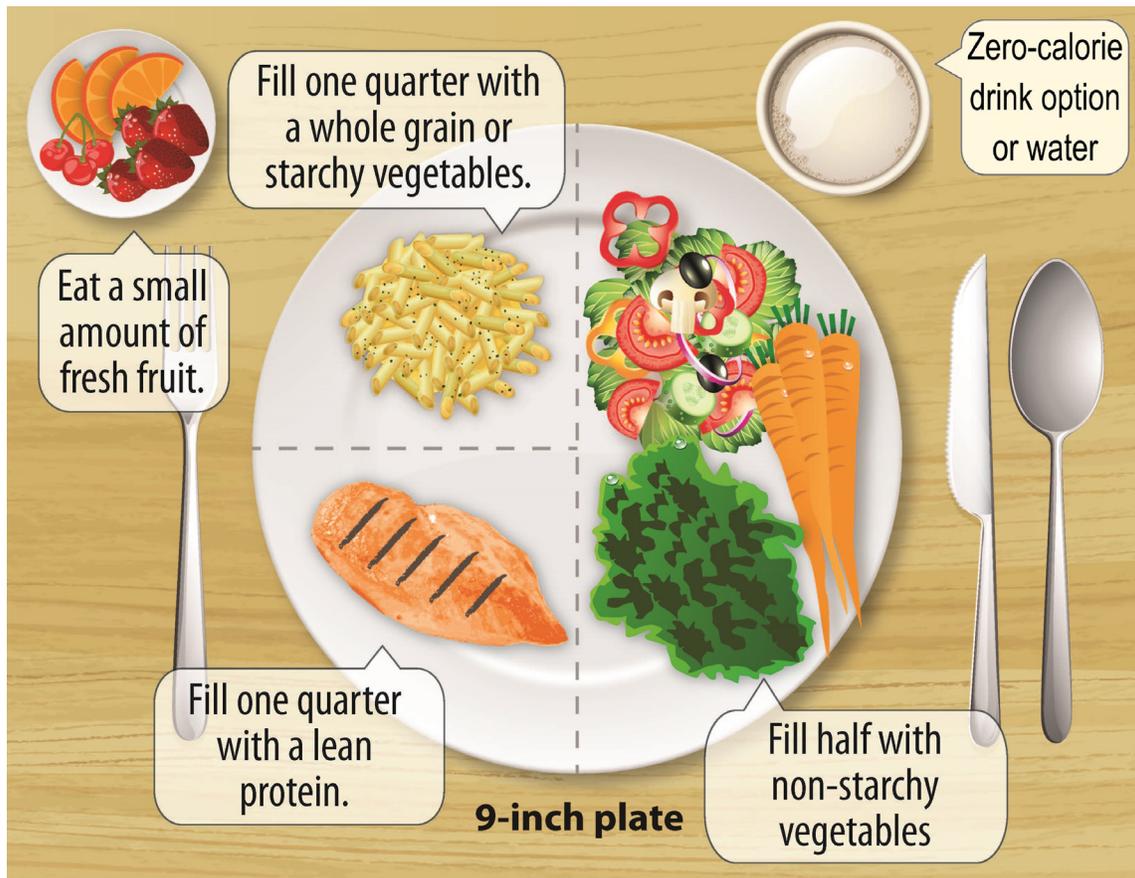
- Even healthy foods will cause high blood glucose if you eat too much.
- Make sure each of your meals has the same amount of CHOs.
- Follow the My Plate Planner ([www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)).

### Use My Plate Planner

Create a healthy plate that will help to keep your blood glucose levels in an acceptable range. Select foods from the Appendix Food Charts, and follow the plate method's 4 easy steps (see Figure 1):

1. Draw a line down the middle of your plate and fill 1/2 of your plate with non-starchy vegetables.
2. Draw another line across the middle of the other 1/2 of your plate and fill 1/4 of your plate with a grain or starchy vegetable. Fill the final 1/4 of your plate with a lean protein.

**Figure 1: My Plate Planner**



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3. A small piece of fruit or a serving of dairy is optional.
4. Finish your meal off with a glass of water or other zero-calorie drink option.

## Reading food labels

Food labels contain important information to help you manage your meal plan (see Figure 2).

Since carbohydrates have a big impact on your blood glucose, it is important to keep track of how many carbohydrates you eat. Carbohydrates are measured in grams (g).

Figure 2: Food Nutrition Label

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size ½ cup (80 grams)			
Servings Per Container 4			
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>			
<b>Calories 110</b>	Calories from Fat 0		
% Daily Value*			
<b>Total Fat 0g</b>	0%		
Saturated Fat 0g	0%		
Trans Fat 0g	0%		
<b>Cholesterol 0g</b>	0%		
<b>Sodium 115mg</b>	5%		
<b>Total Carbohydrate 20g</b>	7%		
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%		
Sugars 0g	0%		
<b>Protein 7g</b>			
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 2%		
Calcium 4%	Iron 10%		
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4	Protein 4	

1. Find the serving size.

2. Find the calories (amount per serving).

- Counting calories each day will help you reach your weight loss goal.

3. Find the total carbohydrate per serving.

- A dietitian can teach you more about the amount of carbohydrate that fits your specific needs.

One serving of carbohydrates is 15 grams. Your care team will talk to you about how many grams of carbohydrates per day are right for you.

### A healthy menu example:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/2 cup oatmeal</li> <li>• 1 cup berries</li> <li>• 1 cup skim milk</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp peanut butter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 slices whole grain bread</li> <li>• 3 ounces sliced turkey</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp mustard</li> <li>• 1 cup carrot sticks</li> <li>• 1 small apple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 to 4 ounces baked fish</li> <li>• 2/3 cup brown rice</li> <li>• 1 cup cooked broccoli</li> <li>• 1 cup salad</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp salad dressing</li> <li>• 1 cup raspberries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/3 cup hummus</li> <li>• 1 cup cucumbers</li> </ul>

This menu example shows 3 to 4 servings of carbohydrates at each meal.

These are general guidelines. To tailor your meal plan to your specific needs, arrange to meet with an outpatient registered dietitian by calling the Northwestern Center for Lifestyle Medicine at 312.695.2300 or the Center for Integrative Medicine at 312.926.DOCS (3627). They can assist you with making an appointment for a personalized consultation.

For more information about diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association (ADA) at 800.DIABETES (800.342.2383) or visit [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

### Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Clinical Nutrition, Center for Integrative Medicine with Medicine Nursing

## Carbohydrates (CHO)

Foods that increase your blood glucose:

<b>Starch</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)	<b>Other Starches and Sweets</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice bread</li> <li>• 6-inch tortilla</li> <li>• 1/2 English muffin, hamburger bun or hot dog bun</li> <li>• 1 small pita</li> <li>• 1/4 bagel (1 ounce)</li> <li>• 1 waffle or pancake (4-inch round, 1/4 inch thick)</li> <li>• 3/4 cup unsweetened, dry cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup sweetened or bran cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, grits, kashi, bulgur)</li> <li>• 1/3 cup cooked pasta, rice, couscous, quinoa</li> <li>• 4 to 6 crackers (2-inch)</li> <li>• 3/4 ounces (15 to 20) pretzels, snack chips</li> <li>• 3 cups light popcorn</li> <li>• 3 Tbsp flour (dry)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/2 cup casserole or lasagna, macaroni and cheese, pasta with meat sauce</li> <li>• 1 cup broth-based soup</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cream-based soup or chili</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp sugar, syrup, jam, jelly or honey</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp light syrup</li> <li>• 2-inch square cake or brownie, unfrosted</li> <li>• 1 to 2 small cookies</li> <li>• 1/2 cup ice cream, gelatin or frozen yogurt</li> <li>• 1/4 cup pudding, sherbet or sorbet</li> <li>• 1/2 cup sugar-free pudding</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)	<b>Milk</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small fresh fruit (tennis ball size)</li> <li>• 1/2 large fruit</li> <li>• 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce</li> <li>• 1/2 cup canned fruit in own juice or water</li> <li>• 1/2 banana (4-inch length)</li> <li>• 3/4 cup blueberries or blackberries</li> <li>• 1 1/4 cup strawberries</li> <li>• 1/3 cantaloupe or honeydew (1 cup cut)</li> <li>• 1 wedge watermelon (1 inch thick)</li> <li>• 17 medium grapes</li> <li>• 1/2 small papaya</li> <li>• 1/2 grapefruit (large)</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp raisins or "craisins"</li> <li>• 1/4 cup dried fruit pieces</li> <li>• 3 dried plums, dates or figs</li> <li>• 1/2 cup unsweetened juice</li> <li>• 1/3 cup prune, grape or cranberry juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup fat-free, skim or reduced-fat milk</li> <li>• 1 cup unsweetened soy milk</li> <li>• 1 cup buttermilk</li> <li>• 1 cup Lactaid™ milk</li> <li>• 1 cup kefir</li> <li>• 6 ounces flavored plain yogurt</li> </ul>

All food products are not created equal. Be sure to read the food labels of the foods you choose to get the correct serving size and nutritional information for that product.

## Other Food Groups

Foods that have little effect on blood glucose:

Non-starchy Vegetables	Proteins <i>(1 serving = 15 g of CHO)</i>	Fats <i>(1 serving = 15 g of CHO)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 1 cup raw vegetables</li> <li>• 1/2 cup tomato or vegetable juice</li> </ul> <p>Any vegetables <i>except</i> corn, peas, potatoes</p> <p>Non-starchy vegetables include onions, asparagus, green beans, broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, jicama, kale, carrots, cucumber, lettuce, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, celery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 ounce lean meat, fish, poultry or shellfish</li> <li>• 1/4 cup low-fat cottage cheese</li> <li>• 1 ounce low-fat cheese</li> <li>• 1 egg or 1/4 cup egg substitute</li> <li>• 1/4 cup nuts</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp peanut butter</li> <li>• 1/2 cup tofu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 tsp margarine, butter or oil</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp reduced-fat margarine, butter, mayo or cream cheese</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp reduced-fat sour cream, salad dressing, or half and half</li> <li>• 1/4 cup avocado</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp nuts (6 to 7 nuts)</li> <li>• 10 olives</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp sesame or sunflower seeds</li> </ul>

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