

Dietitian

Hospital/Clinic

Telephone

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Patient information

Food and Diabetes

Therapies Directorate

What is Diabetes?

In people with diabetes, the body does not produce enough insulin, or the insulin it produces does not work properly. Insulin is a hormone in the body that normally keeps the level of glucose in the blood under control.

Diabetes can be controlled by:

- Following a balanced diet.
- Taking medication as prescribed.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Exercise.

How do I eat healthily for diabetes?

- Eat regular meals containing starchy carbohydrate foods - you should not need to snack in-between meals.
- Reduce your intake of sugar and sugary foods.
- Aim to have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Aim to have oily fish twice a week.
- Limit your fat intake.
- Aim to keep a healthy weight.
- Reduce your salt intake.
- Stay within the healthy limit for alcohol.

Carbohydrates

There are two types of carbohydrates: starches and sugars. Carbohydrate foods when digested release glucose into the blood. Eating recommended amounts and types of carbohydrate regularly through the day can help to maintain your blood glucose level.

Eating three regular meals every day is sufficient for most people and snacking is generally not necessary.

Eating too much carbohydrate foods may cause high blood glucose levels and weight gain.

Starches

Regular intake of recommended amounts of starchy foods at each meal is important in maintaining good control of blood glucose. Starchy foods should fill up about a third or less of your plate.

Starchy carbohydrates include:

- All kinds of breads.
- Breakfast cereals.
- Pasta and noodles.
- Rice and other grains.
- Potatoes, cassava and plantain.

Sugars

Some sugars found in foods and drinks are digested quickly by the body and cause rapid raise in blood glucose levels. Small amounts of foods which contain sugar can be taken as part of a high fibre meal.

It is helpful to control blood glucose levels by replacing high sugar foods with low sugar or sugar-free foods.

Replace high sugar foods with sugar free alternatives where possible.

High Sugar Foods	Suitable Alternatives
Sugar, glucose, fructose, Reduced sugar sweeteners, e.g. Spoonful, Halfspoon.	Artificial sweetener, e.g. Canderel, Splenda, Hermesetas, or Sweetex.
Fizzy drinks, (lemonade, cola, tonic, some flavoured waters).	Sugar free/diet/slim line/low calorie drinks/soda water/ sugar free tonic / sugar free flavoured water.
Sweets, toffees, liquorish, chocolate, chewing gum.	Sugar free sweets /chewing gum, sugar free jelly.

Replace high sugar foods with low sugar alternatives if there is no sugar free option available:

High Sugar Foods	Suitable Alternatives
Tinned fruit in syrup.	Fresh fruit, small portions of dried fruit, tinned fruit in natural juice, stewed fruit with sweetener.
Fruit juice, compote.	One small glass of unsweetened fruit juice at a time.
Yoghurts, fromagefrais.	Natural low fat yoghurt, diet yoghurts: Shape, Ski Light, Muller Light, diet fromagefrais.
Jam, marmalade, honey, syrup, pure fruit spreads.	Reduced sugar, jams/marmalade.
Sweet puddings, desserts, Instant desserts, custard, ice-cream.	No added sugar/reduced sugar desserts: Angel Delight, Instant whip, low sugar rice pudding/ low sugar custard (tinned or made with sweetener), plain ice-cream.
Sweet, cream-filled/ chocolate biscuits.	One to two plain biscuits: Marie, Rich tea, Morning coffee, Hob nobs, Garibaldi oatcakes.
Cakes , pastries.	Currant loaf, tea cakes, scones, malt loaf, low sugar cakes.
Hot chocolate drinks / Horlicks, Ovaltine.	Low calorie chocolate drinks: cocoa made with sweetener, Options, Highlights, Duo's.

There is no need to buy special diabetic foods, they are expensive, high in fat and do not have extra benefit to diabetes control.

The foods listed below will release approximately the same amount of glucose into your blood. The amount you should eat will be discussed with your dietitian

- One small slice bread or finger roll.
- Half a large, thick slice of bread.
- Half a bread roll / wrap /small pita bread / burger bun.
- Two crackers or plain biscuits.
- One Weetabix or Shredded Wheat.
- One teacup of breakfast cereal.
- One small potato.
- Half a teacup of boiled rice/pasta / noodles /mash.
- Small glass fruit juice.
- One third of a pint of milk.
- Small pot of yoghurt.
- Small cup low sugar milk pudding.
- One scoop ice cream.

Sweeteners

Intense sweeteners, e.g. Hermesetas, Sweetex, Canderel, Splenda, Truvia, Stevia do not affect blood glucose levels. These are safe to be used as a replacement for sugar. Other sweeteners like Fructose and Sorbitol are not recommended as they are higher in calories and may have a laxative effect.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are beneficial to health for many reasons. They are high in soluble fibre, a good source of essential vitamins and minerals that can help protect against some of the complications of diabetes, heart disease and cancer. They are also low in fat therefore ideal as a snack.

Try to have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Fruit contains natural fruit sugar therefore fruit portions should be spread out evenly throughout the day.

What is a portion of fruit?

- One small fruit, e.g. apple.
- One fun sized banana.
- Two small fruits, e.g. Satsuma / plums.
- One dessert spoon of dried fruit.
- Two tablespoons of tinned fruit (in juice, not syrup).
- Small handful of soft fruits, e.g. grapes / strawberries.
- One small slice of melon / pineapple.
- One small glass of unsweetened fruit juice.

What is a portion of vegetables?

- Two tablespoons of fresh/frozen / tinned veg.
- One bowl of salad.

Fibre in the diet

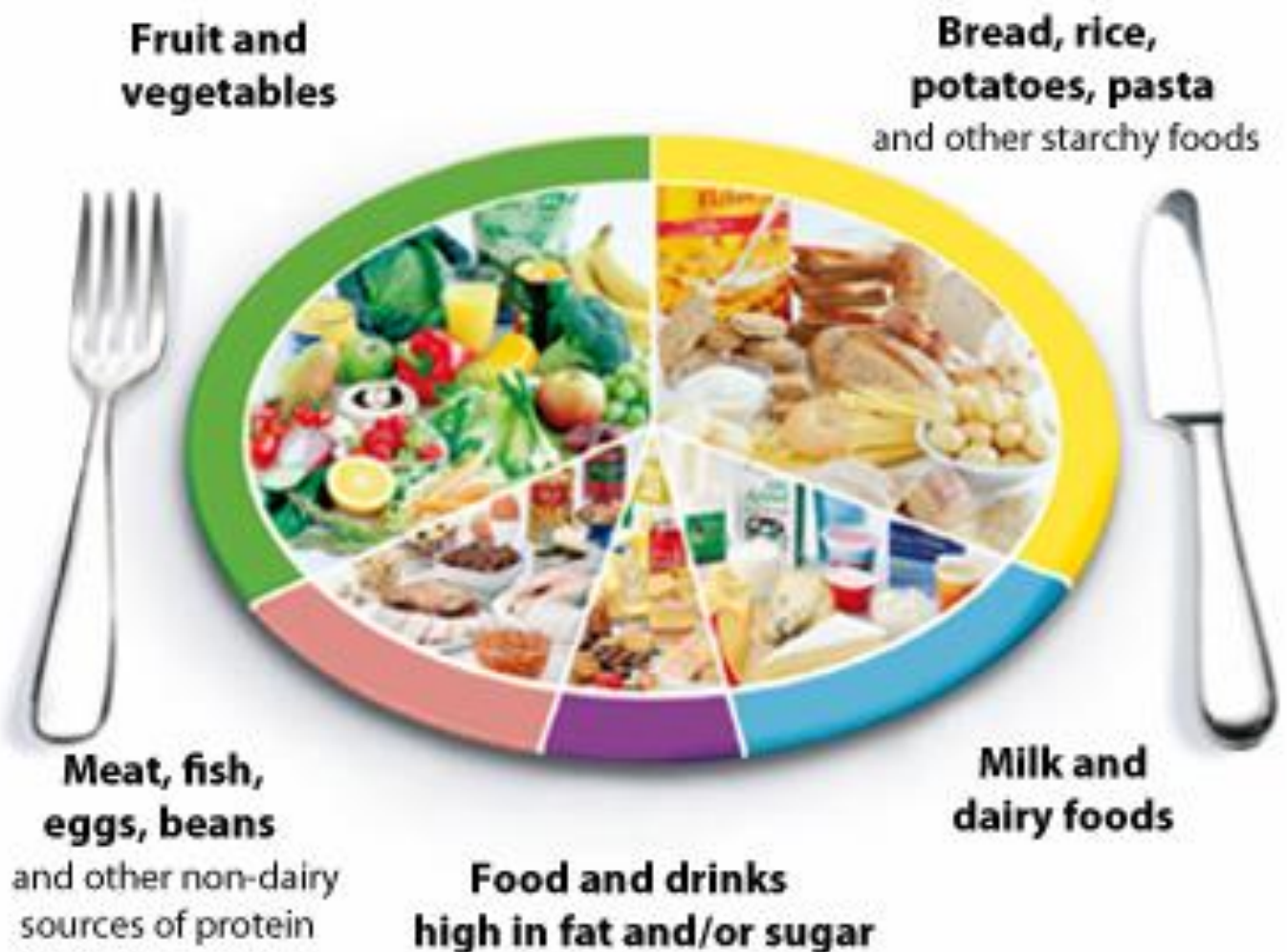
There are two types of fibre in the diet, soluble and insoluble.

Soluble fibre can be beneficial for people with diabetes as it can help to slow down the rise in blood glucose after a meal and lower levels of cholesterol in your blood.

Foods that are high in soluble fibre are oats, pulses (peas, beans, and lentils), fruit and vegetables.

Insoluble fibre that is found in wheat cereals, wholemeal flour, brown pasta and rice, has little effect on the blood glucose level but helps to maintain the bowel regular and keep you fuller for longer.

Balanced Diet



Fruit and Vegetables

- Try to have at least five portions a day. Include a wide variety. For fruit use the carbohydrate list

Starchy Foods

- These are cereals, bread, pasta, rice and potatoes. Include portions of these at each meal – **use the carbohydrate food list**

Protein Foods

- Choose lean meat, poultry, fish and meat free alternatives. Aim to eat foods from this group at two meals per day, making it the smallest portion on your meal plate.

Sugary and Fatty Foods

- Keep these foods to a minimum and use low fat and sugar free / low sugar foods when possible.

Dairy Foods

- Choose lower fat and lower sugar dairy foods.- **use the carbohydrate food list**
- Two to three servings a day

Drinks

- Drink plenty of fluids-water, sugar free fizzy drinks/squash, tea and coffee.

Fats

Food contains different types of fat. One of the most important things you can do to reduce the risk of complications in diabetes is to reduce the total amount of fat you eat.

All fats contain the same amount of energy, and when you do eat fat, choose the healthier types, i.e. polyunsaturated (PUFA) and monounsaturated fats (MUFA), rather than saturated fats.

Saturated Fats	MUFA's	PUFA's
Butter, lard, dripping, suet, ghee Palm oil, coconut oil Full fat dairy products Fat on meat and meat products Hard margarine Hidden fats in pies, cakes, biscuits	Olive oil Rape seed oil, walnut oil, ground nut oil MUFA spread e.g.: Olive Spread Nuts Avocado	Corn oil Sunflower oil Soya oil

Use less	Replace With
Butter, butter mixes, hard margarine, lard, suet, dripping	Small amounts of low fat spread, e.g. Gold, Flora Light, Low fat olive oil based spreads, e.g. Bertolli and supermarket own brand olive spreads, Sunflower spreads, e.g. Flora, Vitalite
Full fat cheese, e.g. cheddar, stilton, brie, cream cheese	Cottage cheese, low fat cheese spread, reduced fat cheese, lower fat cheeses, e.g. Edam, Gouda
Savoury snacks such as crisps, nuts and samosas	Fruit and vegetables
Chips, wedges, roast	Low fat oven chips / roast potatoes, potato, wedges made with very little oil
Full cream milk, evaporated milk condensed milk, full fat yoghurt/fromagefrais, cream, cream	Skimmed, semi-skimmed milk, low fat natural yoghurt or diet yoghurt
Mayonnaise, salad cream, salad dressings	Salad dressings - minimal amount of olive oil or sunflower oil, low fat salad dressing; low fat / light / extra light mayonnaise
Fatty meats, e.g. belly pork, breast of lamb, processed meats, e.g. sausages, burgers, luncheon meat, salami, corned beef, black pudding	Lean meat, e.g. chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, pork - take off excess fat/skins
Fried food	Food grilled, baked, stewed, roasted and steamed

Oily fish

One type of fat called omega-3 fatty acid is particularly beneficial for people with diabetes, as it helps to protect the heart.

It can be found in the natural oil of certain fish such as: mackerel, salmon, fresh tuna, pilchards, sardine, trout and herring. You should aim to have oily fish twice a week.

If these are tinned, they should be in brine or tomato sauce, not oil.

Salt

Too much salt may increase your blood pressure and increase your risk of developing heart disease. Most of the salt we eat is from processed food so it is important to reduce your intake of processed foods and other high salt foods. Try to use less salt at meal times - this includes 'sea salt' and salt substitutes. Taste your food first and either add salt at the table or in cooking, but not both. Herbs and spices create different flavours, which will help make your food tasty.

Alcohol

Alcohol in moderation should not affect your diabetes control.

A unit of alcohol is:

- Half a pint of bitter or lager.
- One pub measure of spirits / sherry / liqueur – 25ml.
- One small glass of wine – 125ml.

Recommendations for safe intake:

- Two to three units per day for women.
- Three to four units per day for men.
- You should try to have at least two or three 'alcohol free' days each week.
- Always choose sugar free/diet mixers: slim line tonic, diet lemonade/cola.
- Try not to drink strong beers/lagers.

Remember that alcohol is high in calories

If you drink more alcohol than recommended then your blood glucose will be affected.

Alcohol can cause your blood glucose to fall low as in a hypoglycaemic attack, the risk of this can be minimised by eating more carbohydrate with and after taking alcohol.

Alcoholic drinks that contain carbohydrate can initially cause a rise in blood glucose.

This should be discussed with your diabetes team.

Activity

Activity is good for everyone. Being more active can help with blood glucose control and weight management. Gentle exercise should be part of your diabetes care plan.
In addition, exercise can help to reduce your cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

This should be discussed with your diabetes team.

Weight and weight loss:

If you are overweight, losing weight will help with the control of your diabetes and can reduce risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke.

Tips for losing weight:

- Be realistic about your target weight.
- Aim to lose weight gradually.
- Make small changes you can stick to.
- Try to be more active.
- Try to eat slowly, sitting down.
- Write a shopping list and stick to it.
- Choose non-food rewards.
- It is easy to mistake thirst for hunger.

Snacking:

If snacking is a problem, think about when you are more likely to snack and think of ways you can deal with this. For example, having a bath, talking to a friend on the phone, or going for a walk - all will make you feel better and distract you from snacking.

Think about how you could distract yourself..... I could:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Further information

Diabetes Dietitians:

The Royal Liverpool University Hospital:

Tel: 0151 706 3050

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3050

Liverpool Community Health:

Tel: 0151 295 3868

Diabetes UK

10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA Email: info@diabetes.org.uk

Diabetes UK Careline: 0845 120 2960 (operates a translation service)

Monday - Friday between 9am and 5pm

Recorded information on diabetes-related topics is available on this number 24 hours a day.

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Liverpool Community Health and Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust.

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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