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HEALTHY EATING: AN IMPORTANT STEP IN TAKING CARE OF YOUR DIABETES

If you have diabetes, you do not need to eat special foods. The foods that are good for everyone are also good for you. This booklet can help you choose healthy foods in the right portion sizes to keep your blood glucose (blood sugar) within your target range.

A healthy eating plan:

- Includes a mix of foods each day: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (beans, lentils, and peas), low-fat and fat-free milk products, seafood, lean meats, poultry, plant-based protein foods, and nuts and seeds
- Limits foods that are high in sodium (salt), solid fats, and added sugars
- Helps you manage your blood glucose and meet your weight goals

A **registered dietitian nutritionist** (RDN) (referred to as **dietitian** in this booklet) can help you learn how to take care of your diabetes. The letters RDN after a person's name stand for *registered dietitian nutritionist* and tell you that this person is a health professional who is an expert in nutrition care, education, and counseling. A certified diabetes educator (CDE) is a health professional who has advanced training and is an expert in the care of people with diabetes (or prediabetes).

Diabetes Self-Care Basics

To keep your blood glucose within your target range, it is important to follow these steps:

- Balance the amount and types of food you eat
- Be active daily
- Take your diabetes medicine as directed
- Check your blood glucose

When you keep your blood glucose within your target range, you will feel better and lower your risk of other health problems related to diabetes complications. Your health care provider will help you decide what target range is right for you.

How Eating Affects Your Blood Glucose

Your body needs insulin (made by the pancreas) to use these nutrients correctly. When you eat foods, especially those that contain carbohydrates (carbs), they turn into glucose (a type of sugar). Glucose is the fuel that powers all the cells in your body. Insulin helps move glucose into your cells. When a person has diabetes, the pancreas does not make insulin or does not make enough insulin to get glucose into the body's cells.

Many people with type 2 diabetes or prediabetes also have insulin resistance. When you have insulin resistance, your pancreas cannot use insulin properly.

At first, your pancreas makes extra insulin to make up for it. But, over time, your body is not able to keep up and cannot make enough insulin to keep the blood glucose in a healthy range. The good news is that cutting calories, being active, and losing weight can reduce your insulin resistance. For people with prediabetes, these lifestyle changes can also reduce your risk for heart disease and prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

To keep your blood glucose within your target range, try to eat about the same amount of food, especially carbs, around the same times each day. Skipping meals may lead to low blood glucose if you use insulin or certain glucose-lowering medicine. However, if you take shots (multiple daily injections) of insulin or use an insulin pump to manage your blood glucose, you have more freedom to vary the amounts you eat at your mealtimes.

No matter how you manage your diabetes, plan to spread your meals and snacks throughout the day. Your dietitian can help you decide the timing and size of meals and snacks that are right for you.

The energy your body needs is measured in calories. Calories come from 3 nutrients found in foods:

- Carbohydrates (carbs)
- Protein
- Fat

Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, and Your Weight

The foods you eat give you energy (or calories). Your body uses these calories to help you breathe, sit, walk, or move (physical activity). If you eat the amount of calories that your body uses for daily activity on most days, your weight should stay about the same. You will gain weight if you eat more calories than your body uses on most days. When you eat fewer calories than your body uses for energy, you lose weight because your body must burn stored calories. If you are at a healthy weight, you can stay at that weight by eating the right amount of food for your body along with physical activity. Your dietitian can help you plan calorie and physical activity goals that are realistic.

How to Be More Active

Physical activity may lower overall blood glucose and reduce insulin resistance, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Regular physical activity may also help you manage your weight. Here are some tips to help be more active:

- Choose an activity you enjoy. Many people enjoy walking because it is easy to do and is free.
- Start with a daily goal of 5 to 10 minutes of activity, such as walking at a pace and distance that feels comfortable. Work up to at least 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. Short amounts of activity count, such as 3 walks that are 10 minutes long.
- Include strength training for muscles at least 2 times a week in your activity plan.
- Wear comfortable shoes with proper fit and good traction.
- Move more in your everyday activities. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park your car farther away from work or the store. Walk to the next bus or subway stop to get a few more steps in.
- Put extra effort into housework and chores, such as washing windows, scrubbing floors, vacuuming, and raking the yard.
- Have backup plans for bad weather. Walk at a mall or warehouse store or find indoor activities you enjoy, such as walking on a treadmill, or find a workout program online, on your TV, or through an app (such as on your smartphone or tablet).

If you have concerns about how to get started with a physical activity program, talk with your health care provider.

A choice on the **Fruits** list has about 15 grams of carbs, 0 grams of protein, 0 grams of fat, and 60 calories.

FRUITS

Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit and fruit juices are on this list.

In general, 1 fruit choice is:

- ½ cup of unsweetened canned or frozen fruit
- 1 small fresh fruit (about 2½ inches in diameter)
- ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) of unsweetened fruit juice (100% juice)
- 2 tablespoons of dried fruit



Eating Plan Tips

- Fresh and frozen fruit are good sources of fiber. Fruit juice contains very little fiber and can raise your blood glucose very fast. Choose whole fruit instead of juice more often.
- Fruit smoothies may contain many servings of fruit. If you can, make your own. If you buy a fruit smoothie, ask to find out if they add sugar, syrup, or sweetened fruit juices.
- Some fruits on the list are measured by weight. The weights listed include skin, core, seeds, and rind. Use a food scale to weigh fresh fruits to figure out how many choices you are eating.
- Read the Nutrition Facts on food labels of packaged fruits and juices. If 1 serving has more than 15 grams of carbs, you may need to adjust the size of the serving to fit with the choices in your eating plan.
- Serving sizes for canned fruits on the **Fruits** list are for the fruit and a small amount (1 to 2 tablespoons) of juice (not syrup).
- Food labels for fruits and fruit juices may contain the words “no sugar added” or “unsweetened.” This means that no sugar—other than the sugar from the fruit itself—has been added. Note that these will still contain carbs.
- Fruit canned in extra-light syrup has the same amount of carbs per serving as canned fruit labeled “no sugar added” or “juice pack.” All canned fruits on the **Fruits** list are based on 1 of these 3 types of packs. Avoid fruit canned in heavy syrup.



Fruits

The weight listed includes skin, core, seeds, and rind.

FOOD	SERVING SIZE
Apple, unpeeled	1 small apple (4 oz)
Apples, dried	4 rings
Applesauce, unsweetened	½ cup
Apricots	
canned	½ cup
dried	8 apricot halves
fresh	4 apricots (5 ½ oz total)
Asian pear, apple pear	1 medium Asian pear (4 oz)
Banana	1 extra-small banana, or about 4-inch-long piece (4 oz)
Blackberries ✓	1 cup
Blueberries	¾ cup
Cantaloupe	1 cup diced
Cherries	
sweet, canned	½ cup
sweet, fresh	12 cherries (3 ½ oz)
Clementine, mandarin orange	2 small (2 ½ oz each)
Dates	3 small (deglet noor) dates or 1 large (medjool) date
Dried fruits (blueberries, cherries, cranberries, mixed fruit, raisins)	2 Tbsp
Figs	
dried	3 small figs
fresh ✓	1 ½ large or 2 medium figs (3 ½ oz total)
Fruit cocktail	½ cup
Grapefruit	
fresh	½ large grapefruit (5 ½ oz)
sections, canned	¾ cup
Grapes	17 small grapes (3 oz)
Guava ✓	2 small guava (2 ½ oz)

One fruit choice is 15 grams of carbs and 60 calories.

Fruits, continued

FOOD	SERVING SIZE
Honeydew melon	1 cup diced
Huckleberries, fresh	1 cup
Kiwi	½ cup sliced
Kumquat	5 pieces (size of a large olive)
Loquat	¾ cup cubed
Mandarin oranges, canned	¾ cup
Mango	½ small mango (5 ½ oz) or ½ cup
Nectarine	1 medium nectarine (5 ½ oz)
Orange ✓	1 medium orange (6 ½ oz)
Papaya	½ papaya (8 oz) or 1 cup cubed
Passion fruit	½ cup
Peaches	
canned	½ cup
fresh	1 medium peach (6 oz)
Pears	
canned	½ cup
fresh ✓	½ large pear (4 oz)
Pineapple	
canned	½ cup
fresh	¾ cup
Plantain, extra-ripe (black), raw	¼ plantain (2 ¼ oz)
Plums	
canned	½ cup
dried (prunes)	3
fresh	2 small plums (5 oz total)
Pomegranate seeds (arils)	½ cup
Raspberries ✓	1 cup
Strawberries ✓	1¼ cup whole berries
Tamarillo	1 cup
Tangerine	1 large tangerine (6 oz)
Watermelon	1¼ cups diced

Reading Food Labels

The Nutrition Facts panel and ingredients list on a food label can help you with your food choices. For more help using the information on food labels, ask your dietitian.

Check the Serving Size. Calorie and nutrient information on the label is for 1 serving of this size. NOTE: This amount is not always the same size as 1 choice listed in this booklet.

Look at Calories per serving. Use the calories listed to compare similar products (check that serving size is the same).

Look at the grams of Total Fat in 1 serving (1 fat choice has 5 grams of fat).

To help lower your risk of heart disease, try to **choose foods that are low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol.**

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

Ingredients: water, tomato purée (water, tomato paste), seasoned beef crumbles (beef, salt, spice extracts), diced tomatoes in tomato juice, red kidney beans, kidney beans. Contains less than 2% of the following ingredients: concentrate (caramel color added), jalapeno peppers, salt, dehydrated onions, **sugar**, dehydrated garlic, paprika, red pepper, soybean oil, soy lecithin, mono and diglycerides, mixed tocopherols, ascorbic acid, flavoring.

Check the grams of Total Carbohydrate. This is the total amount of starches, natural and added sugars, sugar alcohols, and dietary fiber in a food. To figure out how many carb choices are in 1 serving, divide the Total Carbohydrate amount by 15 (1 carb choice has 15 grams of carbs).

Look for foods that have Dietary Fiber. A good source of fiber is about 3 grams of fiber per serving and an excellent source has at least 5 grams or more per serving.

Choose foods that are lower in Added Sugars. Total sugars include sugars that are naturally in foods (such as fruit and dairy products) and sugars that are added to foods. Added sugars tell you how much of the Total Carbohydrate amount comes from sugars added to the food. Every 4 grams of sugar is equal to 1 teaspoon.

The ingredient list provides information about the types of sugars added to food.