



Diabetes & Nutrition

Diabetes is a condition where the body breaks down food into glucose (a type of sugar and the body's main source of energy), but is not able to use it.

Glucose in the blood is regulated by insulin, which is made in the pancreas. There are two types of diabetes, one where the pancreas does not make enough insulin (**type 1 diabetes**) and one where the body can not respond normally to the insulin that is made (**type 2 diabetes**). Keeping blood glucose levels under control helps protect against long term complications of diabetes such as:

- Nerve disease (neuropathy) – tingling, pain, or numbness in the feet and hands; if not properly treated, it can lead to amputation
- Eye disease (glaucoma, cataracts, and blindness)
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease



Diabetes can be managed in part by diet, including:

- **Eating a consistent amount of carbohydrates.** Sources of carbohydrates are starches, milk, fruit, and sweets. Eat similar amounts of these foods at each meal to avoid spikes or drops in blood glucose.
- **Limiting the total fat in your diet.** This will help control your weight, cholesterol levels, and risk for heart disease.
- **Getting plenty of fiber.** Found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, fiber can help minimize blood sugar spikes.

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How many carbohydrates do I need?

It varies from person to person, but in general 45% to 55% of a day's worth of calories should come from carbohydrates.

Here are some basic guidelines to improve the diet:

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits (5 or more servings a day).
- Choose whole fruit over juice.
- Choose whole grain foods over processed "refined" grain products.
- Eat fish 2 – 3 times a week.
- Select leaner cuts of meat like those that end in "loin."
- Choose skim milk (non-fat milk) over whole milk.
- Drink water, unsweetened coffee, or calorie-free beverages.
- Cut back on high calorie snacks like chips, cookies, and cakes.
- Choose non-starchy vegetables such as spinach, carrots, broccoli, or green beans.
- Include dried beans (like kidney or pinto beans) and lentils in meals.
- Use artificial sweeteners like Splenda® instead of sugar. Remember, even "natural" sweeteners like honey and agave are still very high in sugar.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

Additional Notes: