

Just the basics

Diabetes is a condition in which your body cannot properly use and store food for energy. The fuel that your body needs is called glucose, a form of sugar. Glucose comes from foods such as fruit, milk, some vegetables, starchy foods and sugar.

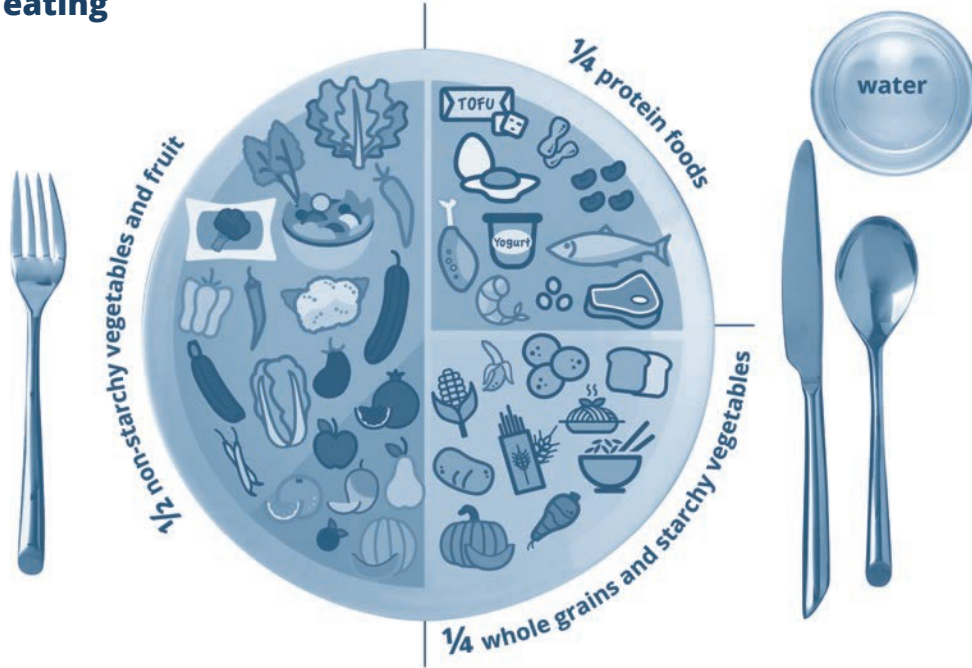
To control your blood sugar (glucose) you will need to eat healthy foods, be active and you may need to take pills and/or insulin.

Here are some tips to help you until you see a registered dietitian.

Tips:	Reasons:
Eat three meals per day at regular times and space meals no more than six hours apart. You may benefit from a healthy snack.	Eating at regular times helps manage blood sugar levels.
Limit sugars and sweets such as regular pop, desserts, candies, jam and honey.	Increased intake of sugar increases blood sugar levels. Artificial sweeteners can be useful substitutes.
Limit the amount of high-fat food you eat such as fried foods, chips and pastries.	High fat foods may cause weight gain. A healthy weight helps with blood sugar control and is healthier for your heart.
Eat more high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads and cereals, lentils, dried beans and peas, brown rice, vegetables and fruits.	Foods high in fibre may help you feel full and may lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
If you are thirsty, drink water.	Drinking regular pop and fruit juice will raise blood sugar.
Add physical activity to your life.	Regular physical activity will improve blood sugar.
Limit alcohol consumption.	Alcohol can affect blood sugar levels and can cause weight gain.



Plan for healthy eating

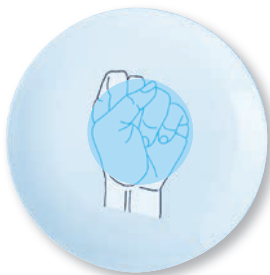


- Eat more vegetables. These are very high in nutrients.
- Choose lean animal proteins. Select more vegetable protein.
- Select plant oils such as olive and canola, and nuts instead of animal fats.
- Include low-glycemic-index foods such as legumes, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables.
- Consider learning about counting carbohydrates, and different types of eating patterns (e.g. Mediterranean, DASH) when you see a registered dietitian.

It's natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you include your favourite foods in a personalized meal plan.

Handy portion guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



Grains and starches/Fruits

Choose an amount the size of your fist for grains or starches, or fruit.



Vegetables

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose brightly coloured vegetables (e.g., green or yellow beans, broccoli).



Protein

Choose an amount the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.

Drink up to 1 cup (250 mL) of low-fat milk with a meal.



Fat

Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

- Diabetes Canada recommends that all people living with diabetes should receive advice on nutrition from a registered dietitian.
- Try to eat breakfast everyday. It provides a good start to the day.
- Try to prepare more of your meals at home and use whole, unprocessed ingredients.
- Eat together as a family more often to model healthy eating behaviours to children and teenagers.
- If you are planning on fasting, talk to your health-care team 1 to 2 months in advance.

Sample meal plan

For smaller appetites

Breakfast:

Cold cereal (½ cup, 125 mL)
 Whole grain toast (1 slice)
 1 orange
 Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Peanut butter (2 tbsp, 30 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Lunch:

1 sandwich
 2 slices of whole grain bread or 6" pita
 meat, chicken or fish (2 oz, 60 g)
 non-hydrogenated margarine (1 tsp, 5 mL)
 Carrot sticks
 Grapes (½ cup, 125 mL)
 Low-fat plain yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Dinner:

Potato (1 medium) or rice (2/3 cup, 150 mL)
 Vegetables
 Non-hydrogenated margarine (1 tsp, 5 mL)
 Lean meat, chicken, or fish (2 oz, 60 g)
 Cantaloupe (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
 Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

Low-fat cheese (1 oz, 30 g)
 Whole grain crackers (4)

Increase your physical activity

- Build time for physical activity into your daily routine.
- Try to be active most days of the week.
- Try to walk whenever you can, instead of taking the car.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the amount of effort; for instance, progress from strolling to brisk walking.
- Make family activities active; try swimming or skating instead of watching TV or a movie.
- Try new activities; learn to dance, play basketball, or ride a bike.
- Enjoy your improved sense of health and well-being.



Follow a healthy lifestyle

- Try to include a protein, carbohydrate/starch, and fruit and/or vegetable at every meal and snack
- Have portion sizes that will help reach or maintain a healthy body weight.
- Include high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads, cereals, and pastas, fresh fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- Make lower fat choices (e.g. use skim milk and lean ground beef, trim fat on meat, chicken etc., and use small amounts of added fat such as oil and salad dressings).
- Healthy eating habits should be built around a healthy lifestyle – keep active every day.

Sample meal plan

For bigger appetites

Breakfast:

Cold cereal (½ cup, 125 mL)
Whole grain toast (2 slices)
1 orange
Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
Low-fat cheese (2 oz, 60 g)
Tea or coffee

Lunch:

Soup (1 cup, 250 mL)
Sandwich
 2 slices whole grain bread or 6" pita
 lean meat, chicken or fish (3 oz, 90 g)
 tomato slices
 non-hydrogenated margarine (1 tsp, 5 mL)
Carrot sticks
Grapes (½ cup, 125 mL)
Low-fat plain yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)
Tea or coffee

Afternoon Snack:

1 medium apple or small banana

Dinner:

1 large potato or cooked noodles (1½ cup, 375 mL)
Vegetables
Green salad with low-fat salad dressing
Lean meat, chicken or fish (4 oz, 120 g)
1 medium pear
Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)
Tea or coffee

Evening Snack:

Peanut butter (4 tbsp, 60 mL)
Whole grain crackers (4)
Low-fat milk (1 cup, 250 mL)

For additional meal plan ideas, go to <https://diabetes.ca/nutrition---fitness/meal-planning>.

Related articles: *Physical activity and diabetes, Glycemic index, Eating away from home, Alcohol and diabetes, Managing weight and diabetes*

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