

## Patient information

# Diabetes: basic dietary advice for people newly diagnosed with diabetes

## Healthy eating

The diet for people with diabetes is not a special diet, it should be a healthy diet that all your friends and family can enjoy. Try to eat regularly and include a variety of foods from each of the following food groups:

### Breads, rice, potatoes, pasta, cereals and other starchy food

- Make one these foods part of every meal
- Choose wholemeal, wholegrain, brown or high fibre white bread

### Milk, yoghurts cheese and other dairy foods

- Try to include at least 3 servings throughout the day

### Meat, fish, eggs and beans (protein foods)

- Aim to include these foods with 2 of your meals daily
- Try to eat more fish and aim for 1 or 2 portions of oily fish such as salmon, sardines or pilchards each week

### Vegetables and fruit

- Aim to have a mixture of 5 portions (about a handful) of vegetables/salad and fruit each day and choose from a variety including fresh, frozen or tinned.

### Sugar and sweet foods

- These do not need to be avoided and small amounts can be included in your diet. Sweets, chocolate and cake are all high in sugar and will increase your blood glucose level quickly. Foods that contain less than 5g sugar per serving are considered low sugar and over 10g per serving is considered high sugar.

## **Salt**

- Too much salt in your diet is not good for you. Try to avoid adding salt to your food and limit salty processed foods such as crisps and ready meals.

## **Carbohydrates:** (sugary and starchy foods)

- Carbohydrates play an important role in your body. They are digested and break down to produce glucose. This glucose goes into your body cells to give them energy. Cells are everywhere in your body, including your muscles and brain. So when they have a good supply of glucose, you can carry out your daily activities and you can concentrate properly.

Insulin lets your body use the supply of glucose. When you eat foods that contain carbohydrate you will make your blood glucose/sugar rise, so your body needs to have INSULIN with foods that have carbohydrate in them. Whether that is insulin you make yourself or insulin which is injected.

The more carbohydrate you eat, the more insulin you will need to keep your blood glucose within target range. Aim to keep your carbohydrate portions similar at each meal.

Carbohydrate can be divided into different types. These are:

- Sucrose – in honey, sweets, sugar drinks
- Lactose – in milk products
- Fructose – in fruits and fruit juice
- Starchy – in pasta, cereal, oats, bread, rice, couscous, potatoes.

## **How can slow and fast absorbing carbohydrates affect my blood glucose levels?**

Glycaemic index (GI) is a measure of how quickly carbohydrates are broken down into glucose and how quickly the glucose levels rise.

Carbohydrates with a low GI are preferred, as they are broken down more slowly and cause a slower release of glucose into the bloodstream and a gentle rise in blood sugar.

Carbohydrates with a high GI are broken down quickly, causing a rapid rise in blood glucose levels.

Choose low GI options more often. Examples include: granary bread, granary crackers, basmati rice, wholegrain cereals, new potatoes with skins, oats, bran flakes, wholemeal pasta, etc.

Adding foods containing fibre, protein or fat to carbohydrates can lower the GI of the whole meal and cause a gentler rise in blood sugar.

Combining foods with different GIs will alter the overall GI of the meal. It is more important to include a low GI food with each meal, rather than avoiding foods with a high GI.

<b>Foods to avoid High sugar / low fibre</b>	<b>Foods to take instead. Low sugar / high fibre</b>
Sugar: all types, white brown, demerara, muscovado, glucose, sorbitol Sweeteners containing sugar eg sucron, fructose, fruisana	No calorie artificial sweeteners, in tablet, liquid or granulated form eg Canderell®, Sweetex®, Hermesetas®, Splenda®, Nutrene®, Flix®, Saxin®
Ordinary jam, marmalade, honey, syrup, treacle, lemon curd	Reduced sugar varieties of jams or marmalades and pure fruit spreads
Tinned fruit in syrup or light syrup	Tinned fruit in natural juice or water
Sweet biscuits	Plain biscuits, eg digestive, rich tea, marie, Hovis® oatcakes
Chocolate and sweets	A piece of fresh fruit for snacks or a plain biscuit. Sugar free gum
Sugary puddings Avoid products which are low fat unless they are also low in sugar	Homemade milk puddings with sweeteners, sugar free whips, sugar free jelly, diet/lite yoghurts, (eg Muller Lite®, Weight Watchers®, Ski®, Shape® or supermarkets own brands), diet fromage frais
Ordinary fizzy drinks or pop, cola, lemonade  Ordinary squash Avoid Hi-juice®, or low sugar varieties e.g. Ribena® light and Luzozade® light	Use low calorie, sugar free diet or slimline varieties.  Sugar free squash e.g. Ribena Toothkind®, Robinsons Special R®, supermarket own brands (no added sugar)

<b>Foods to avoid</b> <b>High sugar / low fibre</b>	<b>Foods to take instead.</b> <b>Low sugar / high fibre</b>
Fruit juices with added sugar	Unsweetened fruit juice-keep to one small glass per day with a meal
Sugary or honey coated breakfast cereals e.g. honey nut cornflakes, Sugar Puffs®	Plain cereal eg Shredded Wheat®, All Bran®, sugar free muesli, porridge, bran flakes, Weetabix®
Drinking chocolate, Horlicks®, Ovaltine®	Cocoa made with mild and suitable sweetener, low calory instant drinks, Ovaltine Options®, Carnation® chocolate, Cadburys Highlights®, Options® or supermarket brands of 40 calories chocolate drinks

## **Fats**

These foods include butter, margarine and cooking oils and convenience foods such as crisps, nuts, savoury and sweet pastries, ice cream and chocolate.

These foods should be eaten and used sparingly as eating too much can lead to being overweight.

Try to choose spreads and cooking oils which are higher in mono or polyunsaturated fats such as olive oil or sunflower oil as these are better for your heart.

Fat doesn't affect blood glucose on its own, but it can slow the absorption of glucose from other foods. This is seen with fatty meals eg takeaways.

Nuts, seeds and cheese are high in fat so limit these if weight is an issue with you.

## **Protein**

The biggest job of proteins is to build muscles and other tissues in your body. It also helps fight off diseases and bugs and also help to repair the cells. Foods that contain protein do not tend to affect your blood glucose.

Lean cuts of meat, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds, peas, beans and pulses provide protein, zinc and iron.

Avoid diabetic products, biscuits and chocolate. They contain the same amount of fat as normal varieties and are not lower in calories. Some products contain sorbitol which can cause diarrhoea if eaten in large amounts.

## **Key facts**

- Keep your portions sizes similar at each meal
- Have regular meals containing low GI starchy foods
- If you eat snacks keep them small and keep to one snack (approx. 5 - 10g of carbohydrate) between meals only

## **Example of a meal plan**

### **Breakfast**

- Bowl of cereal and milk **or** two slices of bread/toast with spread or butter
- Very small glass of fruit juice or piece of fruit.

### **Mid-morning**

- Small snack from the list if needed

### **Lunch**

- Sandwich made with two slices of bread with protein filling such as lean meat, fish or eggs or vegetarian protein source and salad
- Piece of fruit or a yoghurt

### **Mid afternoon**

- Small snack from the list if needed

### **Evening meal**

- Protein source such as meat or fish or vegetarian protein source with plenty of vegetables and one portion of potatoes **or** pasta **or** rice
- Piece of fruit or a yoghurt

### **Bedtime snack**

- Small snack from the list if needed

This is just an example to give you an idea of the importance of eating regular meals based around carbohydrate, protein and how to include vegetables, salad and fruit in your day.

## Some examples of small snacks

These snacks are low in carbohydrate (approximately 5g carbohydrate)

- ★ 1 very small apple or pear
- ★ 1 malted milk biscuit
- ★ half a grapefruit
- ★ 1 plum
- ★ 100g plain yoghurt
- ★ 45g olives
- ★ 40g blueberries (20 berries)
- ★ 2 breadsticks (add to vegetables and dips listed on the other page)
- ★ 1 cracker + low fat cream cheese / tuna / salmon / salad
- ★ Some brands of flavoured yoghurt – check product labels.
- ★ Home-made ice lollies, made with no added sugar squash.
- ★ 1 rich tea biscuit
- ★ 5 cherries
- ★ 1 kiwi fruit
- ★ 100g raspberries
- ★ 1 fresh apricot
- ★ 85g strawberries (7 berries)
- ★ 1 satsuma/clementine/tangerine

These foods are low in carbohydrate but also high in calories (some are also high in salt). If you are trying to lose weight, only choose them occasionally (once or twice a week) and in small amounts.

- ★ 70g peanuts
- ★ 25g sunflower seeds
- ★ 1 mini Scotch egg (20g weight)
- ★ 30 cashew nuts
- ★ 10 - 15g crisps (½ a small bag)

## What about alcohol?

Whether you have diabetes or not the daily government guidelines for alcohol intake remain the same no more than two units a day. Try to have two to three alcohol free days a week.

For further information, become a member of the leading UK diabetes charity or visit their website:

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