Food Guide for People with Diabetes

Healthy eating helps you to:

- control your blood glucose levels
- control your weight
- reduce the chances of developing complications from diabetes

Good diabetes control depends on a balance between:

Healthy Eating ↔ Physical Activity

This pamphlet focuses on healthy eating to help control your blood glucose levels.
Carbohydrate

- Carbohydrates provide your body with energy.
- When carbohydrates are eaten, they get broken down into glucose. This is absorbed into your blood and affects your ‘blood glucose level’.
- Balancing your blood glucose level is an important part of managing your diabetes. This can be done by controlling how much carbohydrate you eat.

### Sources of starch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Sugars</th>
<th>Foods with added sugar for sweetness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast cereals, rolled oats, muesli bars</td>
<td>Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread and bread products, including roti, chapatti, pita bread, bagels, crumpets</td>
<td>Cakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crackers, crispbreads, cabin bread</td>
<td>Biscuits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grains - couscous, buckwheat, sago, semolina, quinoa, rice, noodles, vermicelli, pasta</td>
<td>Scones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legumes - dried peas, beans, lentils, dahl, baked beans, kidney/haricot beans, chickpeas</td>
<td>Muffins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starchy vegetables - potato, kumara, corn, parsnip, taro, green banana, tapioca, breadfruit, yams, cassava</td>
<td>Ice-cream</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Fruit Juice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
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<td>Honey</td>
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Are all carbohydrates the same?

Some carbohydrate foods are more slowly digested and produce a more gradual rise in blood glucose levels. These are better for people with diabetes. These are called ‘low glycaemic index’, low GI foods, or ‘slow release’ carbohydrate foods.

**Examples:**

- Wholegrain breads (bread where you can still see seeds and grains) – e.g. Burgen, Vogel’s
- Wholegrain cereals – e.g. All-Bran, traditional rolled oats, Special K
- Wholewheat pasta
- Brown or basmati rice
- Legumes – e.g. dried peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas

What about sugar?

Small amounts of added sugar and foods containing sugar can be included as part of a healthy eating pattern, but are best included as part of a low fat, high fibre meal. A small amount is the equivalent of 1 - 2 teaspoons. An example would be:

- A scraping of regular jam or honey on a slice of wholegrain bread.
- Sugar in savoury foods, such as baked beans and tomato sauce.
- A teaspoon of sugar with cooked rolled oats.
- A teaspoon of Milo or Ovaltine in a cup of low fat milk.
**Protein**

Protein foods are needed for growth and repair of body tissues. Choose low fat varieties:

| Lean meat, fish, chicken, eggs, seafood, legumes – dried peas, beans & lentils | 1 - 2 serves per day | 1 serve meat, fish, chicken = ‘palm’ size  
1 serve eggs = 1 egg  
1 serve legumes = ¾ cup |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Low fat milk, yoghurt, cheese | 2 - 3 serves per day | 1 serve milk = 250ml  
1 serve yogurt = 150g pottle  
1 serve cheese = 40g small matchbox size |

**Fats and oils**

Fats and oils are needed by the body, but only in very small amounts. They are all high in energy (kilojoules / calories) so limit your intake if you want to lose weight.

**It is best to limit saturated fats:**
- butter, lard, Kremelta, palm oil
- fatty meat, chicken skin
- cream, coconut cream

**Instead, choose unsaturated ‘heart-friendly’ fats in small amounts:**
- Oil - olive, canola, peanut, safflower, sunflower, soybean, rice bran
- Margarine
- Nuts, peanut butter, avocado

**Water is best!**

Drinking water is best.

Try flavouring water with:
- A wedge of lemon
- Mint leaves
- Sliced cucumber
- Chopped fruit (e.g. strawberries, oranges)

Other sugar free drinks include:
- Tea (no added sugar)
- Coffee (no added sugar)
- Diet or ‘sugar free’ drinks