

Eating Well to Prevent or Manage Diabetes

Part of the *Learning to Live Well with Diabetes* Series

Welcome! A prediabetes or diabetes diagnosis can feel overwhelming. There is so much to learn and so much to do. The **Learning to Live Well with Diabetes** series was created to share clear, practical information and resources to offer support without adding extra stress. Setting small, manageable goals over time can help relieve stress and lead to lasting health improvements, and you don't have to do it alone. Please take what is helpful to you on your journey and leave the rest.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact:

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What is Eating Well?

Eating well means engaging with food in a way that has meaning. As humans, we rely on food to sustain life and to provide our bodies with the fuel that they need for energy and to stay in good, working, order. We also rely on food to contribute to our social and emotional well-being- to provide enjoyment and foster social connection.



Eating well does not mean using food to guilt, shame, punish or judge our personal circumstances or behaviors or the circumstances or behaviors of others. Today, eating has become complicated; planning, shopping and preparing can feel challenging, time-consuming, expensive, and overwhelming. When you layer in health needs, social obligations, and the wide variety of information-good and bad-that we can find in the media, it's easy to lose sight of what it means to eat well. The bottom line is that eating well is personal, and there is no single, correct, way to eat well.

How is Eating Well Related to Diabetes?



Many health conditions require additional attention to food and eating. People with allergies, food sensitivities, chronic conditions like diabetes and others often have additional eating considerations—things that they need to pay attention to promote health and stay safe.

Diabetes and eating well are closely connected because the foods we eat—and how we space them through the day—directly influence how steadily our blood sugar rises and falls. Eating well with diabetes doesn't mean perfection or rigid rules; it means giving your body a mix of nutrients that help it use insulin more effectively and keep glucose levels in a healthier range. On the next pages, we'll explore some practical approaches.



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What Basic Information Can Help Me Eat Well?

There is some basic nutrition information that you may already know but can be helpful as you prepare to adjust your eating to support diabetes management. This basic information can help focus priorities and plan well rounded meals and snacks that support blood glucose management.



Calories: A calorie is simply a unit of energy—it's the fuel your body uses to think, move, breathe, and carry out every internal process that keeps you alive. You can think of it like the energy in a battery: food supplies the charge, and your body draws on that energy throughout the day to function well.

Macronutrients: Macronutrients are the three main types of nutrients—carbohydrates, proteins and fats—that your body needs in larger amounts to provide energy and support essential functions. Each plays a different role, from fueling your cells to building and repairing tissues to keeping you full and satisfied.

The primary micronutrients in the diet are:

Carbohydrate	Protein	Fat
<p>Carbohydrates are your body's main source of energy, powering cells for daily activities. Carbs that digest more slowly—like those high in fiber—help keep blood sugar steady and provides lasting fuel.</p> <p>Calories from carbohydrates should make up around half of the energy we eat each day.</p>	<p>Proteins are the building blocks for your body. They help repair tissues, support strength, and keep you feeling full longer, which makes meals more satisfying.</p> <p>Calories from protein should make up about one quarter of the energy we eat each day.</p>	<p>Fats provide concentrated energy and help your body absorb key vitamins (A, D, E, and K). They also support brain health and hormone production. Unsaturated fats from foods like nuts, seeds, fish, and olive oil help keep your heart healthy</p> <p>Calories from fats should make up about one quarter of the energy we eat each day.</p>
<p>Examples of carbohydrates include fruits, vegetables, bread, rice, pasta, milk, and beans.</p>	<p>Examples of proteins include meats, fish, eggs, milk, nuts and beans</p>	<p>Examples of fats include oils, butter, mayonnaise</p>

A Note on Carbohydrates and Diabetes



Carbohydrates (carbs) are not the enemy for people with diabetes— they're actually an important source of energy and nutrients. They simply play a bigger role in how blood sugar rises and falls, which means they need more attention. By choosing carbs that digest more slowly, pairing them with protein or healthy fats and being mindful of portion sizes, people with diabetes can enjoy them in a way that supports steadier glucose levels. It's not about avoiding carbs—it's about understanding how to work with them, so your body feels its best.

Using Nutrition Facts Labels

A **Nutrition Facts label** is a quick guide to what's inside your food; it can help you make choices that support steady energy and blood glucose. You can find the label on most packaged foods that you buy. The **servicing size** at the top tells you what amount all the numbers refer to, which is key for understanding how much you're actually eating. **Fat and saturated fat** help you gauge heart-healthy options. **Carbohydrate** shows you the total amount that can impact blood glucose, and **fiber**—listed just underneath—can help soften those spikes by slowing digestion. **Protein** gives you a sense of how filling and balanced the food may be. Taken together, the label offers a simple snapshot so you can compare options and choose what works best for your health needs.

Nutrition Facts	
about 10 servings per container	
Serving Size	2 tbsp
Amount per serving	
Calories	90
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 7g	9%
Saturated Fat 1g	4%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 125mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 2g	5%
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 2g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 30mg	2%
Iron 1mg	4%
Potassium 60mg	0%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Quick Tips for Planning Meals and Snacks

Meal planning can make managing diabetes feel more predictable and less stressful. When you plan meals and snacks ahead of time, you're more likely to include foods that support steady blood glucose—like balanced portions of carbohydrates, fiber-rich vegetables, and sources of protein. It also helps you to pace your meals and snacks throughout the day, reducing last-minute decisions that can lead to big swings in energy. Planning can make grocery shopping easier, save money, reduce food waste, and ensure you have foods on hand that fit your personal goals, preferences, and routines. Overall, it's a practical way to stay organized and support consistent blood glucose management.



Start small.

Begin by planning just one or two meals per week so it feels manageable. As it gets easier, add more.



Choose meals you already enjoy.

You don't need brand-new recipes—pick familiar meals that you know how to make and that fit your routine.



Build balanced plates.

Aim to include a source of carbohydrate, lean protein, and something with fiber (like veggies, beans, or whole grains) to support steady blood glucose.



Plan for snacks, too.

Pair a carbohydrate with a protein or fiber—like fruit with nuts, crackers with cheese, or veggies with hummus—to help keep energy steady.



Make a short grocery list.

Write down the items you need for the meals you've planned. This cuts down on guesswork and helps you stay organized.



Keep a backup option.

Have one easy “emergency meal” on hand—like eggs, a frozen entrée you like, or canned soup—so you're prepared on busy days.

Quick Tips for Eating Well with Diabetes

Eating well with diabetes doesn't have to feel complicated or restrictive. In fact, small, thoughtful choices can make a real difference in helping your body keep blood sugar steadier and your energy more even. Think of these tips as gentle supports rather than rules—practical ways to build meals that nourish you, fit your life, and leave you feeling satisfied.



Include fiber-rich foods at most meals.

Why it helps: Fiber slows digestion and helps prevent blood sugar spikes.

Example: Add a handful of spinach to scrambled eggs or mix beans into taco meat.



Pair carbohydrates with protein or healthy fat.

Why it helps: This combination gives meals “staying power.”

Example: Instead of having fruit alone, pair an apple with peanut butter or a slice of cheese.



Choose slower-digesting carbs.

Why it helps: Whole grains and starchy vegetables lead to gentler glucose rises.

Example: Swap white rice for quinoa or brown rice or choose whole-grain pasta for weeknight dinners.



Eat at fairly consistent times.

Why it helps: Predictable spacing helps stabilize blood sugar throughout the day.

Example: Aim for breakfast within 1–2 hours of waking, then meals or snacks roughly every 3–5 hours.



Add vegetables wherever you can.

Why it helps: Veggies add fiber, volume, and micronutrients without spiking glucose.

Example: Keep baby carrots or cherry tomatoes on hand to throw next to a sandwich or wrap.

Quick tips for eating well with diabetes continue on the next page.



Limit sugary drinks and highly sweetened snacks.

Why it helps: Liquid sugars and sweets raise blood glucose quickly.

Example: Choose sparkling water with lemon or iced tea without added sugar instead of soda.



Practice mindful portions of higher-sugar foods.

Why it helps: You can still enjoy treats in ways that work with your body.

Example: If you love dessert, enjoy a small portion and eat it after a meal rather than on an empty stomach.



Plan for busy moments.

Why it helps: Having something nourishing ready makes balanced choices easier.

Example: Prep a batch of overnight oats or boil a few eggs to grab on rushed mornings.



Build balanced snacks.

Why it helps: Snacks that pair carbohydrates with protein, healthy fats or fiber—can help keep blood sugar steadier between meals.

Example: Pairing apple slices with peanut butter or whole-grain crackers with cheese provides a mix of nutrients that slows digestion and supports more stable glucose levels.



Notice how different foods make you feel.

Why it helps: Your body gives useful feedback on what helps you feel energized and steady.

Example: After meals, check in with your energy and fullness—use that to guide future choices.

Are you ready to get started? The *Learning to Live Well with Diabetes* series Goal Setting Tool can help you get started! (If you're not feeling quite ready, it can help with that, too.)