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## Managing Your Diabetes: Healthy Eating

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There are several healthy diet approaches you can choose when it comes to managing your diabetes.

### Low Carbohydrate

Studies have shown that patients with diabetes who consume a low-carbohydrate diet see marked improvements in blood sugar levels, and sometimes weight loss as well. They also are often able to reduce or eliminate the need for medication.

#### *What are carbohydrates?*

Your body uses carbohydrates to make glucose, which is the fuel that gives you energy. There are three main types of carbohydrates:

- Starch—Found in potatoes, corn, dried beans, cereal, bread and grains (e.g., white rice)
- Dietary fiber—Found in vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts and whole-grain foods (e.g., whole-wheat bread or oats)
- Sugar—Found naturally in foods such as fruit, vegetables or dairy products, or added to processed foods such as cakes and cookies

Eating foods that have carbohydrates can make your glucose levels increase, so it is important to be aware of the amount of carbohydrates you are eating.

Choose meals that contain the following:

- Foods high in protein and healthy fats
- Vegetables like lettuce and spinach that are low in carbohydrates
- Low amounts of grains and foods with sugar

### Low Fat

While carbohydrates get much of the attention in diabetes circles, it's also important to eat less saturated fat. People with diabetes are at high risk for heart disease, and limiting the amount of saturated fat you eat will reduce your risk of heart disease.

Choose meals that contain the following:

- Vegetables, fruits, starches (such as bread or pasta), lean protein and low-fat dairy
- Low amounts of fat and saturated fat

### Mediterranean Style

The Mediterranean diet refers to an eating pattern that includes mostly plant-based, nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and whole grains, with olive oil as the main fat source. This kind of diet has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease and improve control of blood glucose in patients with diabetes.

Choose meals that contain the following:

- Fruits, vegetables, breads, cereal, beans, nuts and seeds
- Fresh foods that are in season
- Unprocessed foods (foods that do not contain additives, artificial flavorings and other chemical ingredients)
- Fruit for dessert
- Low amounts of sugar or honey
- Healthy fat, such as olive oil, instead of butter
- Low-to-medium amounts of dairy, eggs, red meat and wine (with meals)

### Vegan and Vegetarian

A low-fat vegan or vegetarian diet also can reduce the risk of heart disease for people with diabetes. However, both vegan and vegetarian diets often result in inadequate intake of some vitamins. Talk with your doctor if you decide to follow one of these diets, to make sure you are receiving adequate amounts of essential nutrients.

Choose meals that contain the following:

- Fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and beans
- *For a vegan diet:* No foods that come from animals
- *For a vegetarian diet:* Eggs and/or dairy are permitted

**Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH)**

The DASH diet is a healthy eating approach designed to help treat or prevent high blood pressure. This diet involves lowering your sodium intake and eating a variety of foods rich in nutrients such as potassium, calcium and magnesium.

Choose meals that contain the following:

- Fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, poultry (chicken or turkey), fish and nuts
- Low amounts of red meat, sweets, drinks with added sugar, salt (sodium) and foods with saturated fats

*Source: American Diabetes Association*