



Meal Plan Basics

Advice for meal planning

Food Finder

Plate method, personalized

Per meal: _____

• 9-inch diameter plate • ¼ plate meat or protein foods • ½ plate non-starchy vegetables
• _____ servings fats • _____ servings carbohydrates (starches, fruits, milk), or _____ grams

Per snack: _____

• _____ servings carbohydrates, or _____ grams
• _____ ounces of protein

Wondering how the foods you like fit into your meal plan? What a serving looks like? How to get the most nutrition when you eat? This chart can help.

Carbohydrate

STARCHES

Each of the servings below contains about **15 grams of carbohydrate**. Starches include bread, rice, pasta — and starchy vegetables like beans, peas, corn, and potatoes.

Good sources of minerals, B vitamins, fiber

To get the most nutrition from these foods:

- Most of your grains should be whole grains, like whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice.
- Eat more lentils and beans.
- Choose low-fat, low-salt, and low-sugar starches.



1-ounce slice whole-grain bread products



6-inch corn or flour tortilla



4 to 6 crackers



½ cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, cream of wheat) or ¾ cup unsweetened cold cereal



⅓ cup cooked brown rice or whole-wheat pasta



½ cup cooked beans, peas, or lentils (also protein-rich)



½ cup corn



½ medium baked or sweet potato, ½ cup mashed potato, or 1 cup winter squash

FRUITS

Each of the servings below contains about **15 grams of carbohydrate**. Fruits include fresh, frozen, dried, and canned fruits — as well as fruit juices (in small amounts).

Good sources of vitamins A & C, minerals, fiber

To get the most nutrition from these foods:

- Consume whole fruits more often than juices.
- Eat the edible peelings of fruits to get the most fiber.
- Choose fruits without added sugar, sweeteners, or syrups.



1 small apple, orange, pear, or peach (about the size of a tennis ball)



½ medium banana, or mango



15 grapes



1 cup honeydew or cantaloupe



1 cup berries



2 tablespoons raisins or other dried fruit



½ cup unsweetened canned fruit



½ cup unsweetened apple, orange, or grapefruit juice

MILK

Each of the servings below contains about **12 grams of carbohydrate**. Milk, soymilk, and yogurt are in this group.

Good sources of protein, vitamins A & D

To get the most nutrition from these foods:

- Always choose nonfat or low-fat milk and yogurt.
- Choose unsweetened milk, soymilk, and yogurt — or versions flavored with artificial sweetener.
- Drink lactose-free versions if you need to.



1 cup nonfat milk



1 cup low-fat milk



1 cup plain, unsweetened soy or rice milk



¾ cup (6 ounces) plain, lite, low-fat yogurt



⅓ cup plain greek yogurt

MILK ALTERNATIVES

Check label for carbohydrate amount



protein shakes



almond milk



oat milk



coconut milk

NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES (FREE)

Each of the servings below contains about **5 grams of carbohydrate**. Non-starchy vegetables — like broccoli, carrots, and greens — are lower in carbohydrates and calories.

Good sources of vitamins A & C, folate, fiber

To get the most nutrition from these foods:

- Eat fresh or frozen more often than canned vegetables.
- Buy and prepare vegetables without sauces, fats, or salt.
- Try flavoring vegetables with herbs and spices.



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw



½ cup canned tomato



½ cup vegetable juice

PROTEIN-RICH FOODS AND MEATS

Each of the servings below contains **0 grams of carbohydrate and about 7 grams of protein**. Fish, poultry, meat, eggs, cheese, and tofu are in this group.

Good sources of iron, zinc, B vitamins

To get the most nutrition from these foods:

- Eat fish more often.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim excess fat from poultry — and keep servings about the size of a deck of cards (3 ounces).
- Instead of frying — bake, broil, or roast meats.



1 tablespoon peanut butter or 2 tablespoons nuts



½ cup tofu or other soy products



1 egg or 2 egg whites



1 ounce low-fat cheese



¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese



1 ounce cooked fish



1 ounce cooked chicken (fat and skin removed)



1 ounce lean beef

OILS AND FATS

Each of the servings below contains **0 grams of carbohydrate and about 5 grams of fat**. Vegetable oils, some nuts, and saturated fats (butter, bacon) are in this group.

Help the body run smoothly, provide flavor and texture

To get the most nutrition from these foods, read labels and:

- Most often, choose monounsaturated fats and oils.*
- Less often, choose polyunsaturated fats and oils.
- Limit or avoid saturated fats and trans fats.



*1 teaspoon olive, canola, or peanut oil



*8 olives, 6 almonds or cashews



*⅓ avocado (2 tablespoons)



*1 tablespoon nuts

MOST OFTEN



1 teaspoon corn, safflower, or sunflower oil



2 tablespoons light salad dressing



1 tablespoon reduced-fat mayonnaise

LESS OFTEN



1 slice bacon



1 teaspoon of butter



2 tablespoons cream or half-and-half

LIMIT or AVOID

Meal Plan Basics

Healthy eating isn't as difficult as it sounds. And in spite of what you might think, meal planning actually makes life simpler! How? By helping you do these 3 important things:

1 Establish consistent eating patterns

Most people — not just people with diabetes — eat better, feel better, and have more energy when they eat regular meals.

Why?

Food and glucose levels are closely linked. So when you eat sporadically — too much at one time, too little at another — your blood glucose levels also tend to be sporadic. But when you keep your food intake consistent (especially your carbohydrate intake), you can smooth out some of the peaks and valleys in your glucose levels.

How?

Stick to these simple rules:

- Eat meals and snacks at regular times every day.
- Don't eat between meals, except for planned snacks.
- Don't skip meals.
- Eat about the same amount of carbohydrate each day; and space it evenly throughout the day.

If you're counting **carbs**, keep these guidelines in mind:

- **1 serving** = 15 grams carbohydrate
- **Women** need about 3 to 4 servings (45 to 60 grams) of carbs per meal
- **Men** need about 4 to 5 servings (60 to 75 grams) of carbs per meal

2 Choose foods wisely

For the most part, nutrition guidelines for people with diabetes match what everyone should be doing for their health.

Why?

You need a balanced diet to get the nutrients you need for good health. Learning a few basics (like those below) can help you do this.

How?

Build a better diet with these 6 basic building blocks:

- 1 Include more vegetables and whole fruits in your meals — they're full of fiber and vitamins.
- 2 Eat more whole grains like whole-wheat bread, brown rice, and oatmeal.
- 3 Choose heart-healthy proteins like beans, skinless poultry, and lean meat.
- 4 Choose unsaturated fats and oils, rather than saturated or trans fats.
- 5 Select low-fat dairy products most of the time.
- 6 Limit your salt intake and also go easy on sweets and alcohol.

Limit desserts and sweets. When you eat them, be sure to count their carbs. Talk with your dietitian for recommendations.

3 Control the size of your servings

Studies show that most people eat what's put in front of them. In the U.S., super-sized servings have led to weight gain.

Why?

Watching your serving sizes can help you balance your carbohydrate intake. It can also help keep variety in your diet and manage your weight.

How?

Try these tricks to right-size your meals:

- **Divide your plate into zones.** As shown on the front of this handout, fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables. Fill one-fourth of your plate with protein-rich foods (like beans or meat). Take your milk and fruit on the side.
- **Measure or weigh your portions.** The inside of this handout gives you some standard serving sizes. Use measuring cups or a food scale to see how your servings compare.
- **Eat slowly** — and stop before you're full. Don't wait till your brain gets the "I'm full" signal from your stomach. By then, you've already eaten too much.

For additional ideas, contact a registered dietitian nutritionist (RD) at: intermountainhealth.org

Enjoy your food!

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