

DIABETES MEAL PLANNING

WHICH METHOD IS BEST FOR YOU?

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Diabetes and food do a unique dance. You need to eat a variety of foods to stay healthy, but too much of some foods can lead to weight gain and can affect your diabetes control. Your diabetes food plan should fit your nutritional needs, daily routine, eating habits, food likes, and blood glucose and diabetes goals. You and your diabetes care team should find the method that best helps you plan meals, stay healthy, and maintain proper weight and blood fat (lipid) goals. And if one approach doesn't work for you, try another. There are many diabetes meal planning methods to choose from. Which one is best for you? Here are three popular methods to consider.

1. The Plate Method

This simple meal planning method is easy to use at home and when you eat out.

For breakfast

Draw a pretend line down the middle of your 9-inch plate. Place a small carbohydrate serving of whole-grain toast or cereal on one side. Split the other half of the plate into two sections. Fill one with a meat or meat substitute, such as an egg, egg whites, low-fat cottage cheese or Canadian bacon. Fill the other part with a small piece of fruit or enjoy ½ cup of juice. If you wish, you can also have a cup of skim or low-fat milk, sugar-free hot chocolate or light yogurt. If you use a bowl at breakfast, keep your portions small.

For lunch and dinner

Again, draw a pretend line down the middle of a 9-inch plate. Fill one side with non-starchy (low-carb) vegetables, such as green beans, zucchini,

cauliflower, spinach, summer squash, Brussels sprouts, carrots, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, celery and lettuce. Then, split the other side into two equal parts. Fill one part with carbohydrate-rich foods, such as baked or sweet potato, corn, peas, chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, or whole-grain rice, pasta or bread. The last part of your plate should be filled with protein foods, such as skinless chicken or turkey, fish, eggs, lean beef or pork, low-fat cheese, low-fat cottage cheese or tofu. To round out your meal, add a small fruit serving (½ cup or one small piece of fruit) and 8 ounces of skim or low-fat milk or 1 cup of light yogurt.

2. Carb Counting

When you know how many carbohydrates (carbs) are in each serving of food, you can eat the amount that will help you maintain good glucose control.

Foods that have carbohydrates will raise your blood glucose level. Experts suggest that people with diabetes eat at least 130 grams of carbohydrates each day to stay healthy. Many people eat 45–60 grams of carbs at each meal and 10–15 grams for each snack. A dietitian can help you use this method to plan your meals. If you use insulin, your dietitian can also help you use your carbohydrate totals to figure out how much insulin to take at mealtimes.

3. Glycemic Index

This tool can help you get the most out of your diabetes meal plan.

The Glycemic Index (GI) ranks carbohydrate foods by the effect they have on the body's glucose level. Foods are listed as having a high, medium or low GI. Low foods have the smallest effect and high foods have the greatest. The list is not perfect but can help you make better food choices when you plan your meals. For example, if you want to eat a fruit but don't want your glucose level to jump too high, choose one that has a low or medium GI.

These meal-planning methods offer you ways to eat well while at home and away. Meet with a dietitian to learn the best way to use them.

