

MEAL PLANNING

This sheet is for your information and is not a substitute for medical advice. The specifics of your condition and treatment should be discussed with your healthcare provider to establish the optimal treatment plan for you as an individual.

Following a healthy eating plan is important to help keep blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels within an acceptable range. All people with high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes mellitus types 1 and 2 need to follow a healthy, balanced diet to prevent the complications of consistently high glucose levels.

Losing weight with an energy-restricted healthy eating plan may be an important part of your treatment. If possible, consult a dietician for personalised meal planning, or contact your doctor.

Tips for better meal planning

- Eat at least three regular meals a day. Ideally these should be three equally sized, evenly spaced meals, eaten at more or less the same time every day.
- There are certain groups of people for whom snacks are essential. These include children and adults who have high-energy requirements and people who use certain types of insulin.
- Never skip meals.
- Eat plenty of wholegrain products. Legumes are a good source of fibre. They are digested more slowly and will help to control your blood sugar. They also ensure that you don't feel hungry.
- Limit saturated fat and cholesterol intake. Steam, bake or grill foods instead of frying. Always remove visible fat from meat prior to cooking and use low-fat products such as low-fat or skimmed milk and low-fat cheese.
- Eat small portions of protein (e.g. fish, meat and cheese) and larger portions of vegetables and starchy food. Three to four servings of fruit a day should be eaten at meal or snack times. Avoid fruit juices, as they are a very concentrated source of fruit and are often artificially sweetened.
- Food labelled as 'No sugar added' is not necessarily sugar free.
- Use salt and sodium substitutes in moderation. Instead, use herbs, salt-free spices and other flavouring to season food. Limit use of salt substitutes and consult with your case manager or doctor.
- Nutritive sweeteners, e.g. fructose, have a greater calorie value than sugar and must be used in moderation. Non-nutritive sweeteners are more suitable.
- If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to one or two a day. Choose sugar-free mixes. Don't drink on an empty stomach and when your blood sugar is not well controlled.
- Eat home-prepared meals wherever possible. When you eat out, choose foods such as clear soup, plain baked potato, grilled fish and vegetables.
- Cut down on convenience foods such as pies, chips and pastries as they often have a high hidden fat content.
- Consult a dietician to help you learn more about a healthy eating plan.
- Remember that, if you are diabetic, all food affects the level of your blood sugar.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water a day.
- Limit tea and coffee to less than five cups a day.