



## Food Choices

Healthy eating for people with diabetes is similar to that recommended for everyone. Choosing healthy foods and being active can help you to manage your blood glucose levels.

There is no need to follow a diet, prepare separate meals or buy special foods, so relax and enjoy healthy eating along with the whole family!

### What should I eat?

To help manage your diabetes, your meals need to be:

- Low in fat, particularly saturated fat
- Based on quality carbohydrate foods, such as wholegrain bread and cereals, beans, lentils, vegetables and fruits.
- Regular and spread evenly throughout the day

Along with health eating, regular physical activity can help you to manage your blood glucose levels, reduce your blood fats and maintain a healthy waist circumference.

#### Fats

Fats have the highest kilojoule (calorie) content of all foods. Eating too much fat can lead to weight gain, poor blood glucose control and can increase blood fats (cholesterol and triglycerides).

However small amounts of healthier fats add flavour to your food, may improve your blood fat level, and reduce your risk of heart disease. Therefore, the type of fat you eat is important, as well as the amount.

#### Types of fat

##### **Saturated fat**

It is important to limit saturated fat as it raises your LDL ('bad') cholesterol levels.

Saturated fat is found in animal foods like meat, milk, butter, and cheese. Vegetable saturated fats include palm oil (found in solid cooking fats, snack foods or convenience foods) and coconut products such as copha and coconut milk or cream.

### Tips to reduce your saturated fat intake:

- Choose low-fat milk, yoghurt, ice cream and custard.
- Limit the quantity of cheese you eat and try reduced fat and low-fat varieties
- Choose lean meat and trim any fat off before cooking. Remove the skin from chicken before cooking
- Avoid the use of butter, lard, dripping, cream, sour cream, copha, coconut milk, coconut cream and hard cooking margarines
- Limit pastries, cakes, puddings, chocolate and cream biscuits to special occasions
- Limit pre-packaged biscuits, savoury packet snacks, cakes, frozen and convenience meals
- Limit the use of sausages and processed deli meats (Devon, polony, fritz, luncheon meat, chicken loaf, salami etc)
- Avoid fried take away foods such as chips, fried chicken and battered fish. Choose BBQ chicken (skin off) and grilled fish instead.
- Avoid pies, sausage rolls and pasties. Choose tomato based sauces rather than creamy sauces, and avoid creamy style soups.

## Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat

Some fat is important for good health. Use a variety of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats to achieve a good balance.

### Foods with a high proportion of polyunsaturated fat include:

- Sunflower, safflower, soybean, corn, cottonseed, grape seed and sesame oils
- The fat found in oily fish such as herring, mackerel, sardines, salmon and tuna
- Polyunsaturated margarines (check the label for the word polyunsaturated)

### Foods with a high proportion of monounsaturated fat include:

- Canola and olive oil
- Avocado

Seeds, nuts, nut spreads and peanut oil contain a combination of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat.

### Tips for enjoying healthy fats:

- Eat more fish (aim for three times a week) because it contains a special type of fat (omega 3) that is good for your heart
- Stir fry meat and vegetables in a little canola oil with garlic or chilli
- Dress a salad or steamed vegetables with a little olive oil and lemon juice or vinegar
- Sprinkle sesame seeds on steamed vegetables
- Use linseed bread and spread a little canola margarine
- Snack on a handful of unsalted nuts, or add some to a stir fry or salad
- Spread avocado on sandwiches and toast, or add to a salad

## Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate foods are recommended as the main energy source for your body. When they are digested they break down to form glucose in the bloodstream. If you eat regular meals and spread your intake of quality carbohydrate foods evenly throughout the day, you will help maintain your energy levels without causing large rises in your blood glucose levels.

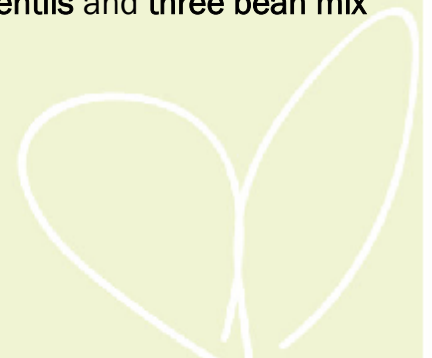
Not all carbohydrate foods are the same. Traditionally, carbohydrate-containing foods have been classified as either containing simple sugars; like fruit and table sugar, or complex carbohydrates; like breads, cereals, legumes and starchy vegetables. This was based on the physical structure of the carbohydrate in the food. Research done on the Glycemic Index has proven this information to be outdated.

The Glycemic Index or GI is a way of describing how a carbohydrate containing food affects blood glucose levels. Foods with a low GI raise blood glucose more slowly than foods with a high GI. This does not mean that you can only eat carbohydrate foods that are low in GI but including these low GI foods throughout the day, ideally one at each meal, can help maintain healthy blood glucose levels.

The foods listed below all contain carbohydrate.

Those in **BOLD** have a low GI.

- Bread – especially wholegrain and wholemeal varieties such as **Burgen Breads™**, multigrain, , **sourdough** and pita.
- Crispbread crackers and biscuits such as **Ryvita™ Oat varieties**, Arnott's Rye Cruskits™, Salada™, **Arnott's Snack Right™** and Freedom Fruit Cookies™
- Breakfast cereals - rolled oats or **untoasted muesli**, **All-bran™** or **All Bran Fruit n Oats™**, Mini Wheats™ or **Guardian™**
- Aldente pasta, rice (basmati, or **doongara**) and other grains such as **barley**, **bulgar**, **quinoa** and couscous.
- Legumes - **baked beans**, **kidney beans**, **chick peas**, **lentils** and **three bean mix**



- Fruit – all types such as **apples, oranges, peaches, bananas**, melons and **grapes**. Fruit is a good source of fibre; try to eat the whole fruit rather than drinking the juice.
- Milk products or dairy alternatives – choose low fat varieties of **milk, soy drink** (calcium fortified), **custard, yoghurt** and **ice cream**.
- Starchy vegetables – potatoes, sweet potato, **yam, sweet corn**.

Other vegetables are generally low in carbohydrate and therefore have little effect on your blood glucose levels. Include a least five serves of vegetables each day.

Watch out for sources of carbohydrate that do not provide good nutrition (like vitamins and minerals) or are high in fat. These include:

- Cakes, biscuits, lollies, chocolate
- Soft drinks, cordial
- Sugar, jam, honey

You can still eat these foods but only have them in small amounts, for example a teaspoon of sugar in tea/coffee or thinly spread ordinary jam or honey on a low GI bread.

Alternative sweeteners such as Splenda™ or Equal™ and foods containing sweeteners such as low joule or diet cool drinks and cordials can be used if preferred.

### Does the amount of carbohydrate I eat matter?

Blood glucose levels are determined by both the quality of carbohydrate, or GI of the carbohydrate and the quantity of the carbohydrate. If you eat too much of any carbohydrate your blood glucose levels will rise, this includes low GI foods. This also means that you should be able to eat small amounts of high GI foods. The best thing to do is use the checklist below and test your blood glucose levels to see how your body responds to different amounts and types of carbohydrate foods.

### Checklist for carbohydrates

- Is it high in fibre?
- Does the food give you other nutrients, Such as vitamins, minerals and protein
- Does it have a low GI value?

#### Alcohol

The 2009 NHMRC Australian Guidelines recommend drinking in moderation. To minimise risks to your health, follow these limits:

- Males: Two standard drinks a day
- Females: Two standard drinks a day

#### One standard drink is equal to:

100ml wine  
285ml regular beer  
375ml low alcohol beer (less than 3% alcohol)  
30ml spirits

- For women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding and for people under 18 years, the safest option is to **not** drink alcohol at all
- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can cause hypoglycaemia if you are taking insulin or some types of diabetes tablets
- Eat a meal or have some carbohydrate containing foods when drinking alcohol. It is advisable to eat a carbohydrate containing snack a few hours after consuming alcohol, e.g. before bed
- Discuss alcohol with your doctor or diabetes educator
- All alcoholic drinks are high in kilojoules (calories). As a comparison, 2 small (100ml) glasses of wine contain the same kilojoules as a small (80g) steak.
- Low alcohol or light beers are a better choice than regular beers because they are lower in alcohol and therefore kilojoules
- When mixing drinks use low Joule/diet mixers such as diet cola, diet ginger ale or diet tonic water

## Food Labelling



All packaged foods must have an **Ingredient List** on the label. All ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Current guidelines require the percentage of the naming ingredient to be listed. Any ingredients that can cause an allergic reaction must be declared. In general, people with diabetes need to limit foods that contain a high proportion of saturated fats and should also limit foods that contain a large proportion of high glycemic index sugars. Common names for saturated fats and high glycemic index sugars are:

### Summary

- Eat plenty of breads, grains, cereals (preferably wholegrain), vegetables (including legumes) and include them at each meal
- Eat regular, moderately sized meals that contain quality carbohydrates and space them evenly throughout the day
- Try to include some low GI carbohydrate foods each day
- Eat foods lower in fat and particularly low in saturated (animal, palm and coconut) fat.

Saturated Fats	High GI Sugars
Animal fat	Dextrose
Butter	Glucose
Coconut	Glucose syrup
Copha	Malt
Cream	Malt extract
Di or mono-glycerides	Maltose
Lard	Maltodextrins
Milk solids	
Palm oil	
Shortening	
Tallow	
Hydrogenated oil	
Partially hydrogenated oil	



If one or more of these names are found in the first three ingredients on the ingredient list, the product is likely to be high in that particular component. Note that saturated fats such as palm oil are often listed on ingredient panels as vegetable oil or fat. For example, potato chips that have vegetable oil as their second ingredient may still be high in saturated fat, if the vegetable oil listed in the ingredients is actually palm oil. Make sure to check the saturated fat percentage on the nutritional panel.

## Food labelling

The **Nutrition Information Panel** provides very useful information that can be used to decide whether a food is suitable for someone with diabetes.



### Serving Size

This is the average serving size of the product as determined by the manufacturer. However, this may not be the same size as the serving you have.

### Per 100g

100g is a useful standard to compare products to see which is lower in fat. Use this information when choosing products.

### Fat & Saturated fat

Use the figure per 100g, compare similar products and pick the one with less fat and saturated fat. This food is very low in fat.

### Carbohydrate

**Total:** This includes both sugars and starches in food.

**Sugars:** This informs you how much of the total carbohydrate is sugar. This includes added sugar as well as sugars such as lactose (milk sugar) and fructose (fruit sugar). Check the Ingredient List to determine the sugar source.

## NUTRITION INFORMATION

SERVINGS PER PACKAGE: 1  
SERVING PER SIZE: 50g

	PER 50g SERVE	PER 100g
Energy	501kj	1002kj
Protein	3.5g	7.0g
Fat	0.4g	0.8g
Carbohydrate		
-total	23.3g	50.6g
-sugars	7.5g	15.0g
Dietary fibre	3.4g	6.8g
Cholesterol	Nil	Nil
Sodium	195mg	370mg
Potassium	145mg	290mg

### Sodium (salt)

Choose products as low in sodium as possible. Those with more than 500mg/100g are considered to be high sodium foods

### Dietary Fibre

Use the figure per 100g and pick the product that is higher in fibre. Aim to have approximately 30g of fibre each day. This food is high in fibre.

Attend a Diabetes WA Shop Smart session to learn more about label reading!

## Examples of healthy meal choices

### Breakfast – choose from:

- Breakfast cereal preferably wholegrain such as porridge, All-Bran™, 5 Grains Mini-wheats™, plain untoasted muesli – with low fat milk
- Bread or toast, preferably wholegrain, wholemeal or fruit bread with thinly spread margarine, peanut butter, jam, Vegemite™ or try with baked beans, grilled tomato, or sardines
- Fruit

### Light meal – choose from:

- Soup, preferably containing vegetables and legumes
- Sandwich made with bread, roll, crackers or crisp bread, preferably wholegrain or wholemeal, with thinly spread margarine or avocado
- Salad vegetables
- A small serve of lean meat, skinless poultry, seafood, egg, fat reduced cheese or a more generous serve of legumes (such as beans or lentils)
- Fruit

### Main meal – choose from:

- Starchy vegetables, pasta or rice
- Other vegetables (include freely)
- A small serve of lean meat, skinless poultry, seafood, egg, fat reduced cheese or a more generous serve of legumes
- Bread, roll, crackers or crisp bread, preferably wholegrain or wholemeal, with thinly spread margarine or avocado
- Fruit or low fat milk pudding, yoghurt or ice cream

You can have your main meal at lunch or dinner, whichever you prefer.

## Between meal snacks

If you are taking insulin or tablets for your diabetes discuss whether you need to have between meal snacks with your dietitian or diabetes educator. These could include fruit, wholegrain bread, fruit bread, high fibre biscuits, low fat milk or yoghurt.

### How much to eat?

While you may be choosing the right foods, you still may need some assistance to achieve and maintain a healthy weight/waist.

An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) can assist you with evidence based weight loss advice.

To find a dietitian in your area, contact

- Diabetes WA on 1300 136 588
- Or check for Accredited Practising Dietitians under 'D' in the Yellow Pages

Dietitians are based in many local hospitals, diabetes centres and community health centres and are also listed in the telephone directory.

