

Healthy hints for modifying recipes

There is no need to stop making your favourite dishes if you have diabetes. By making a few changes your recipes can become healthier. This fact sheet will assist you to modify your recipes in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Australians.

The guidelines recommend:

- **Enjoy** a wide variety of nutritious foods
- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced fat varieties should be chosen where possible
- Drink plenty of water
- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake
- Choose foods low in salt
- Limit your alcohol intake if you choose to drink
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars

By making a few simple changes, you can make your recipes healthier.

To follow these guidelines, try some of the handy hints below:

Fats and oils

Butter, Margarine, Oil and Dressings

- In cooking, use small amounts of poly or monounsaturated fats such as olive, canola and sunflower oils instead of butter
- Use low fat cooking methods such as steaming, stir frying, grilling or microwaving
- When baking or using a non-stick pan try using a spray oil
- Instead of frying or sautéing in oil, use water, stock or wine

- Try fat-reduced polyunsaturated margarine and use only a scrape on bread and crackers
- As an alternative to margarine try spreading a thin layer of avocado, ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, hommus or low-fat mayonnaise on bread
- On salads try using an oil free dressing, or make your own using small amounts of oil mixed with balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
- Try low-fat mayonnaise or low-fat plain or savoury yoghurt on salads.

Breads, cereals, rice, pasta and noodles

- Choose wholegrain breads, eg Vogel's Honey and Oat™, Burgen Loaf™ or Wholesoms Wholemeal™
- To add variety, try different types of breads eg. Pita bread, Lebanese flat bread, grain rolls, baguettes, sourdough, rye bread, crumpets, pumpernickel and fruit loaf. Avoid croissants as they are high in fat
- Choose long grain rices like doongara, e.g. Clever Rice™ or basmati
- Use noodles as an alternative to rice when making stir-frys
- Include a variety of pastas like spaghetti, macaroni, fettuccini and penne. Try wholemeal varieties. Top with tomato based sauces rather than creamy style sauces
- Try using couscous occasionally as an alternative to rice or pasta
- Have natural rather than toasted muesli, as it is lower in fat.

Vegetables

- For healthier chips, make your own wedges by cutting potatoes into chunky pieces (leave the skin on), spraying with oil and baking in the oven. Add herbs, spices or vinegar for flavour. Otherwise you can buy lower-fat oven fries/wedges from the supermarket, eg McCain Healthy Choice™ French-Fries or Potato Wedges
- When making roast vegetables, try partially cooking in the microwave, then spray with oil and bake until crisp

- Reduce the amount of oil used for dressings, try to make dressings based on low-fat yoghurt, vinegar or lemon juice
- Instead of adding butter or sour cream to cooked vegetables try a blend of cottage cheese, skim milk and lemon juice, low fat natural yoghurt or reduced fat ricotta cheese.

Milk, yoghurt, cheese, cream and ice-cream

Milk

- Use low-fat or skim milk (less than 1 gram of fat per 100 grams) or fat reduced milk (2 grams of fat per 100 grams). UHT milk is good to keep on hand as it has a long shelf life
- Add Ovaltine Light Break™ or Jarrah™ chocolate drinks to low-fat/skim milk
- Try using low-fat fresh or UHT calcium-enriched soy drink, for example So Good Lite™, or So Good Now™
- Try calcium-enriched soy beverages on breakfast cereal, as a drink, in soups, in custard or in cooking
- Make fruit smoothies using calcium-enriched soy beverage and/or soy yoghurts or try some of the ready made flavoured soy beverages.

Cheese

- Try using reduced-fat ricotta or low-fat cottage cheese
- Use small amounts of reduced-fat block cheeses or use a smaller amount of a stronger flavoured cheese eg. Parmesan
- Sprinkle grated cheese, as you will use less
- For sandwiches use the reduced-fat sliced cheeses like Devondale Seven™, Kraft Free™ or Bega Super Slims™
- For a baked cheese topping use half the amount of cheese mixed with oats, breadcrumbs or wheatgerm
- Instead of using regular cream cheese, try light cream cheese or reduced-fat ricotta cheese (with a dash of vanilla essence for sweet dishes).

Yoghurt and Ice Cream

- Use low-fat or 'diet' flavoured yoghurts or add fruit to low-fat/skim natural yoghurt
- Try reduced-fat frozen desserts like Fruccio™, Fruche Light™ or Vitari™
- Make custard using custard powder and low-fat milk, skim milk or low-fat UHT milk or use commercially made low-fat custard
- Choose low-fat ice creams (less than 5 grams of fat per 100 grams)
- Try a reduced-fat soy-based ice confection or yoghurt.

Cream

- Try low-fat yoghurt or Fruche™ instead
- For desserts use a mixture of reduced fat ricotta cheese and natural low fat yoghurt. For flavour add lemon, strawberry or vanilla essence, or add fresh fruit/pulp, cocoa or coffee
- Try evaporated skim milk that is chilled and whipped
- For savoury creamy sauces, use low-fat evaporated milk, buttermilk, low-fat natural yoghurt or skim milk thickened with cornflour. Add seasonings to flavour.
- Use a small amount of extra light cream (less than 10g of fat / 100g)

Sour Cream

- Try reduced-fat sour cream, low-fat yoghurt, buttermilk or reduced-fat ricotta cheese as an alternative

Coconut Milk

- Use a fat-reduced coconut milk, eg A Taste of Thai Lite™
- Mix together 1 cup low-fat milk or evaporated skim milk with 2 teaspoons cornstarch, 1 teaspoon coconut essence and a little sugar to taste
- Try low-fat yoghurt mixed with a little coconut essence or desiccated coconut (do not boil).
- Look for fat-reduced evaporated milk with coconut essence

Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes

- Choose lean meat/mince and skinless chicken / poultry and trim all visible fat before cooking
- Use approximately 100g of raw meat or chicken per person for the main meal of the day (100g is usually about the same size as the palm of your hand)
- Limit added fats when cooking meat, chicken and fish by using low-fat cooking methods such as grilling, barbecuing and stir-frying. Try using an oil spray. Add flavour by using herbs, spices, tomato-based sauces and marinades
- Cook meat-based casseroles and curries in advance, cool and skim fat off with spoon
- Use lean sandwich meats such as lean ham, chicken and turkey breast
- Try to eat fish (fresh, frozen or canned in springwater) at least 2-3 times each week
- Try baking fish in the oven wrapped in foil. Add lemon juice and herbs such as parsley for flavour and to keep moist
- Boil eggs or if poaching/scrambling eggs use a non-stick pan. Make scrambled eggs/omelettes with reduced-fat milk

- For gravy, drain juices from pan, allow fat to separate and remove before thickening. Alternatively use a low-fat packet gravy.

Legumes

- Try to add tinned, pre-cooked or dry legumes and lentils into more meals
- Add a can of three or four-bean mix to salads or make a bean salad as a side dish
- In mince dishes, try substituting half of the mince with cooked lentils, kidney beans or soy beans etc
- For a quick snack, try baked beans on toast
- As a meat alternative, try making curries based on legumes and vegetables
- Try using tofu/tempeh in soups and stir-frys or try products made of soy protein eg soy burgers/patties.

Nuts

- Choose small amounts of unsalted nuts
- Try toasting raw nuts in the oven or in a non-stick pan, this intensifies their flavour
- Add small amounts of nuts and seeds to salads, stir-frys and sauces or in baked goods such as muffins and cakes.

Sugar

- Small amounts of sugar can be added to recipes. Look at the overall quantity of sugar in relation to how many serves there are (for example half a cup of sugar in a recipe that serves 10 will have very little effect on blood glucose levels)
- When baking cakes and muffins try using fruit or fruit juice to sweeten
- Alternative sweeteners can be used instead of sugar
- Remember that it is generally better to add some types of artificial sweeteners to food after cooking, if possible. This is because some sweeteners (eg saccharin, cyclamate) turn bitter when heated. Others such as aspartame lose sweetness when heated
- If you need to add a sweetener before cooking, Splenda™ or Equal Spoonful™ are the better choices as they do not turn bitter or lose their sweetness when heated.

Biscuits, cakes and pastries

- When baking cakes or biscuits use poly or monounsaturated margarine instead of butter
- Use fat reduced or skim milk in recipes
- For icing, try using ricotta cheese blended with fruit and add a touch of icing sugar
- Make fruit based muffins, scones and slices
- Experiment with fruit puree or egg whites to bind cakes and use less margarine/oil
- When using flour, try a mixture of wholemeal and white flour or add a little oat bran. You may need to add a little extra liquid to keep the recipe moist
- When baking, try substituting ½ cup of white flour with soy or wholemeal flour
- If making a biscuit crumb base use a biscuit that is higher in fibre eg. Weston's Highland Oatmeal™ and line the base of the tin only
- Use filo pastry and brush with a little egg white, fruit juice or low-fat milk instead of oil
- For a pie base, instead of using pastry, try cooked rice mixed with egg white or mashed potato. Use spray oil to coat the dish to prevent sticking
- When making pies, make pastry for the top of the pie only.

Salt

- When shopping look for products that are 'salt reduced' or have 'no added salt'
- Avoid putting salt on the table
- Reduce or omit salt in cooking
- Sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, chicken salt etc are not suitable substitutes for salt
- Instead of using salt to flavour foods try using spices such as pepper, garlic, chilli, mustard, curry, paprika and cardamon
- Add herbs like parsley, basil, oregano, chives, rosemary, coriander, mint, sage, thyme, tarragon and marjoram
- For extra flavour when cooking or marinating try lemon juice, onions, ginger, shallots, vinegar, wine or salt reduced stock, tomato bases and Asian sauces.

For more information:

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