

Basic food guide for people with diabetes

Eating healthy food is an important part of managing your diabetes.

Eating well with diabetes does not mean you need to eat different food from your family. However, you do need to know how many carbohydrates, and what types of carbohydrates, are in your food, as these will directly affect your blood sugar levels.

You should base your meals on the Diabetes New Zealand healthy plate model, shown in the picture on the right.

This means eating plenty of vegetables and fresh fruit, whole grains, lean meat, fish, eggs, in the right portions, as shown on the plate. You also need low-fat and low-sugar dairy products, healthy oils, and nuts.



Eat lots of these foods

Non-starchy vegetables

Eat at least three to four servings of non-starchy vegetables each day. These include:

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|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| Asparagus | Cauliflower | Mixed vegetables | Snow pea |
| Bean sprouts | Celery | Mushrooms | Spinach |
| Beetroot | Cucumber | Onion | Spring onion |
| Broccoli | Eggplant | Parsley | Swede |
| Brussels sprouts | Green beans | Puha | Taro leaves |
| Butter beans | Leeks | Pumpkin | Tomato |
| Cabbage | Lettuce | Radish | Watercress |
| Carrots | Marrow | Silverbeet | Zucchini |

Eat some (but not too much) of these foods

Carbohydrate (starchy foods)

Carbohydrate foods break down into glucose in your body. Too much carbohydrate will increase your blood glucose above recommended levels.

Have some carbohydrate at each meal. Foods containing carbohydrates are:

- **Bread** – wholemeal or wholegrain, including chapatti, pita bread, and roti
- **Breakfast cereals** – high-fibre, low-fat, low-sugar varieties (see the information on how to read a label, below). For example, rolled oats, All-bran, porridge, Weet-Bix.



- **Crackers** – low-fat, wholegrain
- **Fruit** – enjoy all fruit, but have only one piece at a time, and a maximum of three or four servings a day
- **Legumes** – baked beans, chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, split peas
- **Milk and yoghurt** – low-fat, low-sugar
- **Rice and pasta** – brown rice, basmati, doongara, Uncle Ben's parboiled, wholemeal pasta
- **Starchy vegetables** – kumara, potato, corn, parsnip, yams, breadfruit, taro, tapioca, green banana

Avoid these foods

Foods high in sugar

Cakes, sweet biscuits
Condensed milk
Cordials, fizzy drinks
Dried fruit, canned fruit in syrup
Flavoured mineral water
Fruit juice, powdered drinks
High-sugar pre-mixed coffee or chai sachets
Golden syrup, treacle, maple syrup
Honey, marmalade, jam, chocolate spread
Ice-cream, jelly
Lollies, chocolate, carob
Milkshakes, flavoured milk
Muesli bars, roll-ups
Puddings, sweet desserts
Sugar – all types

Foods high in fat

Butter, ghee
Cream, coconut cream
Dripping, lard
Fatty meats such as brisket, bacon, salami, mutton flaps, sausages, luncheon sausage, saveloys
Fried foods, chips, battered food
High-fat takeaways
Kremelta, Chefade
Mayonnaise, creamy salad dressing (look for low-fat varieties)
Sausage rolls, pies, pastries
Twisties, cheezels, crisps, corn chips

Use in very small amounts

These are good fats, but are still very high in calories.

- Avocado
- Margarine
- Nuts
- Peanut butter
- Vegetable oil (for example, canola, olive, peanut, soya)

Protein foods

- Lean meat, chicken without skin, fish, and eggs. Have one to two servings a day. One serving is a piece of meat, chicken or fish the size and thickness of the palm of your hand (or 120 to 150 g), or one egg.
- Low-fat milk, low-fat cheese, and low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt. Have two to three servings a day. One serving is one cup of milk, one pottle of yoghurt, or 1/3 C of cottage cheese.



What to drink

Drink water, tea, coffee, diet soft drinks, diet liquid concentrates

What to look for on a label

To identify suitable foods, always refer to the per 100 g column on the nutritional panel. Check that the food is:

- less than 10 g fat per 100 g
- less than 10 g sugar per 100 g
- more than 6 g dietary fibre per 100 g

You don't need to check fibre on some products, such as dairy products, sauces and dressings. Most labels look like this:

Wheat Biscuits		
Serving size = 30 g (2 biscuits)	Per serve	Per 100 g
Energy (KJ)	444	1480
(Cal)	106	354
Protein (g)	3.6	12.0
Fat – total (g)	0.4	1.3
– saturated (g)	0.1	0.3
Carbohydrate		
– total (g)	20	67
– sugars (g)	0.8	2.8
Dietary fibre (g)	3.3	11.0
Sodium (mg)	84	280



Summary

- Drink six to eight cups of fluid each day. Water is best. Don't drink fruit juice or sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day – at regular times.
- Base your meals on the Diabetes New Zealand healthy plate model.
- Eat some carbohydrate-containing food at each meal.
- Choose foods lower in sugar and salt.
- Choose foods lower in fat.
- Limit alcohol.

For an ideal eating plan, talk to a registered dietitian.

Compiled by Christchurch Diabetes Centre dietitians. Adapted by HealthInfo clinical advisers. September 2015.