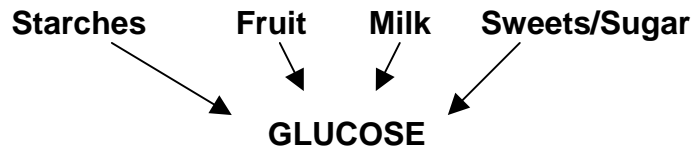


## Diabetes & Meal Planning

All of the foods that we eat can increase blood sugar. There are 3 main types of food that provide energy for your body—carbohydrate, protein, and fat. However, the type of food that has the most affect on blood sugar is carbohydrate. You can help to keep your blood sugars under control by being consistent in eating about the same amount of carbohydrate at about the same time each day.

Starches, cereals, beans, starchy vegetables, fruits, fruit juice, milk, yogurt, and sweets are all broken down the same way in the body. These carbohydrate foods are all digested to form a sugar called glucose, which is released into the bloodstream. Although there are many things that can affect blood sugar, eating too many carbohydrates at one time is a cause of high blood sugar that you can control.



It is important to remember that carbohydrate is your body's main source of energy. You need to include carbohydrate foods as part of a healthy meal plan. Eliminating carbohydrates or following a low carbohydrate diet is not a healthy way to try to control your diabetes. These types of diets can put excess strain on your heart and kidneys due to high amounts of fat and protein.

### Diabetes Meal Planning Strategies

**Be consistent:** Eat the same amount of carbohydrate at the same times each day.

**Eat at regular meal times:** It is important to eat on a schedule. Try to eat all of your meals and snacks at the same time each day. You should try not to go longer than 4-5 hours without eating.

**Do not skip meals:** If you skip meals, your blood sugar may drop too low—especially if you take insulin or other diabetes medications. If you go too long without eating, your blood sugar may increase because the liver will sometimes make glucose to provide fuel for your body.

**Read food labels:** Be sure to look at the total carbohydrate. The sugar and fiber have already been added into the total carbohydrate. It is important to know that a product may be *sugar free*, but **NOT carbohydrate free**.

**Drink more water:** Aim for 6-8 cups (8 oz) of water per day. Water keeps you hydrated, helps you to feel full, has no calories, and will **NOT** affect your blood sugar. Many beverages such as regular sodas, juices, and sports drinks are high in calories and carbohydrate. Drinking more water or other calorie-free beverages will allow you to eat, rather than drink your carbohydrate servings for the day.



This handout was created by the Riverside Regional Medical Center Dietitians.  
Please call **757-594-2000** if you have any questions.

Aim for 25-30 grams of fiber per day: Whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables are all good sources of fiber. Eating more fiber can help to control blood sugars because fiber is not digested as quickly as other types of carbohydrates. Choosing more whole grain breads, pastas, cereals, and crackers will prevent a quick increase in blood sugar after eating. Look for foods that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

Watch your portion sizes: How much you eat is just as important as what you eat. If you are not paying attention to the portion size of the foods you eat (especially carbohydrates), you will not be able to ensure that you are eating consistently. Portion sizes are often smaller than you may expect, and the amount of food you are eating can add up very quickly if you don't pay attention to your portion sizes!

Limit your fat intake: Having diabetes puts you at a higher risk for developing heart disease. Eating a diet high in saturated and trans fat can lead to blocked arteries, so it is important to be sure that you are making heart healthy meal choices!

Include protein with every meal and snack: Protein helps you to feel full and, when eaten with carbohydrate foods, helps to prevent a quick rise in blood sugar. Aim for 6-8 ounces of protein per day. Try to include 2-3 oz of protein per meal and 1 oz of protein per snack.

Follow your carbohydrate meal plan: "Counting Carbohydrates" is a meal planning strategy that can help you to control your blood sugar. Knowing what foods contain carbohydrate, serving sizes, and how many servings of carbohydrate you should eat per meal will help you to be consistent with your carbohydrate intake. 1 serving of carbohydrate = 15 grams. Ask your dietitian how many servings of carbohydrate you should eat at each meal and snack time.



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## Reading Food Labels

The following is a sample food label for a whole-wheat bagel. Notice that the serving size is only  $\frac{1}{2}$  a bagel. If you ate 1 whole bagel, you would have to double all of the amounts listed on the label.

Nutrition Facts	
<b>Serving Size:</b>	$\frac{1}{2}$ bagel (4 oz)
Servings per Container	6
<hr/>	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	160
Calories from fat	15
<hr/>	
<b>Total Fat</b>	1.5 g
Saturated Fat	0 g
Trans Fat	0 g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0 g
<b>Sodium</b>	300 mg
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	30 g
Dietary Fiber	3 g
Sugars	3 g
<b>Protein</b>	5 g

Look at serving sizes!  
Serving sizes are often much smaller than you might think. **Be sure you are not eating too much at one meal or snack!**

Look at the total carbohydrate!  
Remember that sugars and fiber have already been added into this number!

Be sure to choose heart healthy foods. Food label goals per serving for fats are:  
**Total fat < 3 grams**  
**Saturated fat < 2 grams**  
**Trans fat < 0.5 grams**

Look for foods high in fiber. Food label goal per serving of **fiber** is **> 3 grams**.

Include protein with meals & snacks.  
**7 grams of protein = 1 oz**



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