

Think Your Plate

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Making nutritious food choices is a great way for people with diabetes to manage their blood glucose. Managing blood glucose helps reduce the risk for health complications.

What does healthful eating mean if I have diabetes?

- Eating the right amount of whole grain foods, vegetables, fruits, low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, lean cuts of meat, fish or poultry and beans each day.
- Paying attention to portion size (the amount of food you eat in one sitting).
- Spreading three meals and two snacks throughout the day.
- Planning meals ahead of time.
- Having nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables available in your home.

Why is eating healthfully important if I have diabetes?

- Helps you manage blood glucose
- Reduces your risk for heart disease, stroke, eye disease and other complications
- Helps you better manage moods and feelings
- Gives you energy throughout the day

What are the benefits of using the plate method?

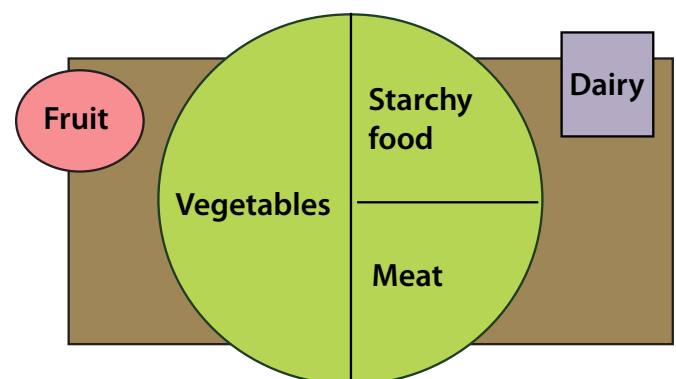
The plate method helps you:

- Visualize nutritious food choices
- Eat more dietary fiber, which helps manage your blood glucose
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Balance meals with foods from all food groups

How can I “think my plate?”

1. Use a dinner plate that is nine inches in diameter. This size helps with portions to support blood glucose management.
2. Imagine that your plate is divided into three sections as shown in the diagrams to the right.

3. Fill your plate according to the following proportions:
 - Use the large section, or half of the plate, for non-starchy vegetables (green salad, cooked or raw broccoli, carrots, green beans, or cauliflower). Eat both raw and cooked vegetables at each meal, and vary your veggies.
 - Use one of the smaller sections, or one quarter of your plate, for starchy food such as pasta, rice, cooked beans, or a starchy vegetable (potatoes, corn, beans, butternut squash and peas).
 - Use the other quarter of your plate for protein (chicken, turkey, fish, beef, pork, eggs, cheese, or tofu). Bake, grill, steam, or broil lean cuts of meat. Eat about 3 to 4 ounces of protein twice a day.
4. Fruit and dairy are outside of the plate and are optional. Both of these food groups include carbohydrates. Consider whether they are a part of your plate based on how you best manage your blood glucose.



Lunch or Dinner Plate

What do I do if I am eating mixed dishes?

When using mixed dishes such as meat-based casseroles or lasagna, one cup counts as a serving. Your serving of the mixed dish takes up the meat and starchy food section on the plate—that is, half of your plate. Fill the other half of your plate with non-starchy vegetables.

Where do sweets and dessert fit?

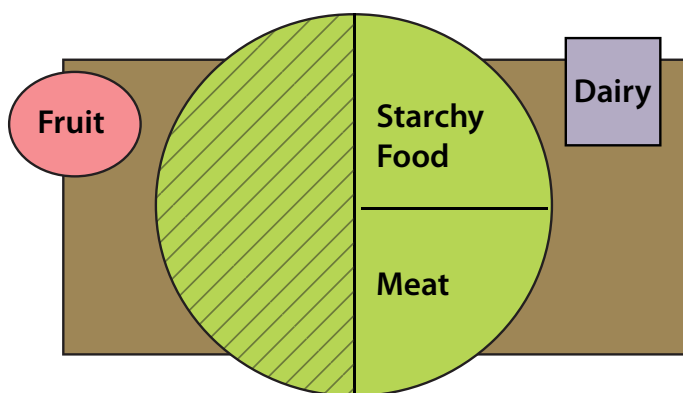
All foods can fit within a healthful eating pattern with consideration of balance and portions. Desserts and sweet foods that contain sugar, such as fruit, can raise blood glucose levels quickly. We can minimize the blood-sugar spike with a few tips:

- Pair the sweet treat with a source of fiber, protein, or fat.
- Sprinkle nuts, which is a source of fat, over a scoop of ice cream.
- Keep the peel, which includes fiber, on fruits when appropriate, such as apples, peaches, and pears.
- Pair nut butter or cheese, both include fat and protein, with fruit for a snack.

Remember, fruits in the correct portion size can be used for dessert as they add a sweet taste and provide vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

What do I do for breakfast?

- Use one quarter of your plate for protein such as one hard-boiled or scrambled egg.
- Use one quarter of your plate for cereal, toast, oatmeal, or other grain items. Choose whole-grain options, when possible, to add fiber to the diet.
- Add fruit and milk.



Breakfast Plate

USDA's MyPlate food groups

Grains

Servings: 6 or more a day

Nutrients: Good source of dietary fiber, vitamins (thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, folate) and minerals (iron, magnesium and selenium)

What equals one serving of grains?

- 1 slice of bread
- $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch corn bread (1½ oz)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ bagel (1 oz)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ English muffin or pita bread
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsweetened ready-to-eat cereal
- 3 cups popcorn
- 4-6 crackers
- 1 corn tortilla (6-inch size)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked cereal
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup potato, yam, peas, corn, or cooked beans
- 1 cup winter squash (butternut, acorn)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of cooked rice or pasta

Choose more often

Whole grains

- whole wheat bread, bagel, English muffin or pita bread
- brown rice
- whole wheat pasta
- popcorn (no butter)

Starchy vegetables (no added fat, sugar, or salt)

- butternut squash
- pumpkin
- potato
- peas or corn
- dried peas and beans
- lentils
- red, pinto, garbanzo or black beans, vegetarian baked beans

Making wise choices

- Choose whole-grain or whole-wheat bread, pasta, and cereal; brown rice; quinoa; and couscous.
- Include beans in your diet every day. They are a good source of fiber and other nutrients.
- Choose whole wheat or other whole grain flours in cooking and baking.
- Have popcorn without butter as a snack.

Vegetables

Servings: 3 to 5 a day

Nutrients: Good source of dietary fiber, folate, vitamins A, E and C

What equals one serving of vegetables?

½ cup cooked carrots
1 cup tossed green salad
½ cup steamed broccoli
½ cup collard or other greens (no added fat)
½ cup summer (yellow or zucchini) squash
1 cup spinach salad
1 cup cucumber
½ cup steamed spinach
½ cup zucchini
½ cup vegetable juice (low-sodium is best)
1 cup cut-up raw non-starchy vegetables (carrots, cabbage, bell peppers, zucchini, cucumber, celery, snap beans, etc.)

Choose more often

fresh
frozen, without sauce
canned, with low sodium or no added salt

Making wise choices

- Choose more vegetables that are dark green, yellow, or orange in color.
- Use herbs and spices to add flavor to vegetables.
- Choose frozen vegetables (no sauce) for quick and easy cooking.
- When buying canned vegetables, choose those that are low in salt.
- Include vegetables at lunch, dinner, and as snacks.

Fruit

Servings: 2 to 4 a day

Nutrients: Good source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, folate, and potassium

What equals one serving of fruit?

1 small, unpeeled apple
1 small orange
1 extra small banana
1 cup melon (cantaloupe, honeydew)
1¼ cup watermelon
1 cup raspberries
½ cup canned, unsweetened fruit
2 tbsp raisins
½ cup orange, grapefruit, or prune juice
1¼ cups of whole strawberries
¾ cup blueberries
1 cup fresh blackberries

Choose more often

fresh
frozen, with no added sugar
canned in 100% juice or water

Making wise choices

- Choose whole fresh or frozen fruits with the peel over fruit juice, when possible.
- Choose unsweetened fruit juice.
- Buy fruits canned in water or 100 percent fruit juice rather than in syrup.
- Vary fruit choices to get a variety of nutrients.

Dairy

Servings: 2 to 3 a day

Nutrients: Good source of protein, calcium, phosphorus, vitamin D

What equals one serving of dairy?
1 cup of milk 1 cup of yogurt 1 cup soy milk
Choose more often
Fat free or low-fat (1%) milk Non-fat yogurt, without added sugar Unflavored soy milk Cottage cheese

Making wise choices

Use fat-free or low-fat milk when making:

- cooked cereals
- cream soups
- desserts

Use fat-free or low-fat yogurt:

- As dips for fruits
- With oatmeal and fruit in a parfait
- With cut-up fruits for dessert
- As a nutritious snack

Protein

Servings: 4 to 6 ounces a day

Nutrients: Good source of protein, B vitamins (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6), vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium

What equals one serving of protein?
1 oz of chicken, turkey, fish, pork, beef ¼ cup cottage cheese 1 ounce of hard cheese 1 egg 1 tbsp peanut butter ½ cup tofu
Choose more often
Lean cuts of meat or pork with fat removed

Making wise choices

- Choose lean cuts of meat, such as those with the words “loin,” “sirloin,” or “round” in the name.
- Remove skin and fat from poultry and meat.
- Bake, grill or roast meat, poultry, and fish instead of frying.
- Choose fish such as salmon, trout, and herring.
- Choose hotdogs, processed sandwich meats, bacon, and pork sausage less often.
- Drain excess fat that appears during cooking.

Ways to stay healthy with diabetes

- Start your day with a balanced breakfast.
- Eat slowly and enjoy the taste of your food.
- Hydration is important throughout the day. Pair water, milk, or non-sweetened beverages like tea or coffee with meals and snacks.
- Eat your non-starchy vegetables and protein first.
- Put away leftovers as soon as you finish eating.
- Enjoy the foods you love. All foods can fit in moderation.
- Keep a journal of the things you eat each day, if it is a helpful practice to you.
- Eat at about the same time each day.

References

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