

Eating Well with Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where the body produces too little or ineffective insulin. This results in high blood glucose or sugar levels. The main risk factors for diabetes are obesity, high cholesterol or blood pressure levels and a sedentary lifestyle.

Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to damage of blood vessels in your heart, eyes, kidneys and nerves. Maintaining a healthy diet, regular physical activity, timely medication and monitoring your blood sugar levels are important for good diabetes control.

People with diabetes can enjoy foods with their family and friends. They do not need to follow a specific 'diabetic diet'. The healthy guidelines below apply to everyone.

1. Maintain a healthy body weight

- Having a BMI greater than 23 kg/m² increases your risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hyperlipidaemia (high blood cholesterol) and hypertension (high blood pressure).
- A modest weight loss may help to improve insulin resistance which results in better blood sugar control.
- If you are overweight, aim to reduce your weight gradually by about 2kg to 4 kg per month.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

Asian BMI (kg/m ²) Cut Off Points	Health Risk
18.5 or less	At risk of nutritional deficiency
18.6 to 22.9	Well nourished; Low health risk
23.0 to 27.4	Moderate health risk
27.5 or more	High health risk

2. Do not skip meals.

- Having regular meals help prevent hunger pangs and moderate your blood sugar levels.

3. Identify carbohydrate-containing foods

- When you eat carbohydrate-containing foods, they increase your blood sugar levels.
- There are 2 types of carbohydrates:
 - 1) *Simple carbohydrates* are digested quickly and cause a sudden rise in blood sugar levels. Limit the intake of foods/drinks high in simple carbohydrates.



- 2) *Complex carbohydrates* are digested more slowly and cause a gradual rise in blood sugar levels. They are healthier choices for "smoother" blood sugar control.



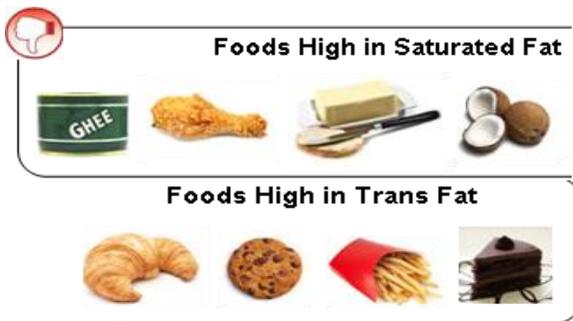
- Remember to spread your carbohydrate intake throughout the day to minimize extreme rise or falls in blood sugar levels

4. Choose high fibre foods

- Fibre takes a longer time to digest and slows down glucose absorption.
- Fibre also promotes the feeling of fullness by providing bulk to the diet.
- Increase your fibre intake from whole-grain foods, legumes, vegetables and fruits.

5. Choose foods lower in fat and cholesterol

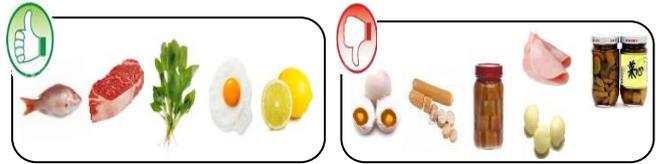
- Reduce your intake of cholesterol, which is only found in animal products such as organ meats (liver, kidney, intestine, heart), seafood (prawn, shellfish, crab), egg yolk and animal fat (fatty meat, chicken skin).



- Reduce your intake of saturated and trans fat. Limit deep fried foods to less than 2 times per week.

6. Choose foods lower in salt

- Select fresh foods and limit processed food.



Fresh Foods

Processed or Preserved Food

- Limit the use of salt or seasoning by using more herbs and spices to enhance the taste of foods.
- When eating out, ask for less gravy, sauces or less salt.

7. If you drink alcohol, moderation is the key!

- Alcohol can cause your blood sugar to dip very quickly especially if you are using insulin or certain types of oral diabetes medication.
- Do not drink on an empty stomach. Include some carbohydrate foods before or during drinking.

A Standard Alcohol Drink



220ml Regular Beer
100ml Wine
30ml Spirit

Recommended intake:

Men: 3 standard drinks or less a day

Women: 2 standard drinks or less a day

8. Be mindful not to overeat

- Identify your hunger cues every time before you eat.
- If you are not sure whether you are hungry, you probably are not!

Please contact Call-A-Dietitian Hotline 983 22 983 if you have any further nutrition-related queries.

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