



# Diabetes and Healthy Food

## Healthy Eating

It's good to know that you can still eat the food you like when trying to eat healthily. Just pick natural food with a high nutritional value. **The most important thing with diabetes is to watch the amount of carbohydrates you eat and to test your blood sugar regularly!**

## Choosing Healthy Food

You may have to make some changes to what and how much you eat, but with the help of a food expert, you'll realise that your choice is still huge!

- **Diversify!** Eat lots of different kinds of food, but not too much of the same food.
- **Balance!** Eat several meals throughout the day and don't skip any.
- **Take your pick!** Vegetables, whole-grain products, fruit, fat-free dairy products, healthy fats and lean meat or fish – there are plenty of different foods that are suitable for you.
- **Get inspired!** There are cookbooks with many ideas for a balanced diet and feature recipes that taste great and also state their nutritional information.

## Carbohydrates – What you Should Know!

Carbohydrates are nutrients that provide most of the energy for your body. Therefore, they are very important when it comes to healthy eating! There are different types of carbohydrates, which influence your blood sugar levels in different ways (quickly or slowly). This means that you have to watch **the type and the amount** of carbohydrates you eat.



## Carbohydrates – Sugars, Starches & Fibers

There are three main natural types of carbohydrate: **sugars, starches** and **fibres**. On the packaging of the food you buy, there is often a nutrition label. It gives you information on the amount of different nutrients in the food: carbohydrates, fat, protein, vitamins, etc. On this label, 'total carbohydrate' comprises all three types of carbohydrates – this is the number to watch when you are counting carbohydrates!

1. **Sugars** (also called simple or fast-acting carbohydrates). Sugars are the smallest building blocks of all carbohydrates. Because of their small size they readily enter the bloodstream and raise blood sugar levels. Natural sugars are present in fruit and milk, for example. Added sugar is used for the preparation of canned foods (fruit in syrup, for example) or when baking cakes and biscuits.
2. **Starches** (also called complex carbohydrates). Starch consists of many sugar building blocks linked together. Starch takes a bit longer to raise the sugar level in your blood. Examples of foods that are rich in starch are:
  - Cereals like wheat, oats and rice and baked products such as bread.
  - Starchy vegetables such as potatoes, lima beans, peas and corn.
  - Lentils, chickpeas and other dried beans such as kidney beans.
3. **Fibers**  
Dietary fibre is made up of the indigestible parts of plant foods. It is not found in animal products such as meat, fish, eggs and milk. Plant foods with a lot of fibre include:
  - Wholegrain cereals, wholegrain breads and wholegrain pasta.
  - Vegetables and fruits, in particular those you eat whole (including their peel).
  - Legumes such as beans, peas and lentils (they're a good source of protein, too!).
  - Nuts such as walnuts, peanuts, Brazil nuts and almonds (they provide healthy fat, but watch the amount of calories that come with them!)

## Count your Carbohydrates

Depending on how many of the different carbohydrate types you eat, your blood sugar level will rise quickly or slowly. Therefore, carbohydrate counting is a good way to manage your blood sugar levels.

Are you curious about how much carbohydrate you eat? Start counting the carbohydrates in your meals, drinks and snacks now! The nutrition label tells you how much carbohydrate food it contains. For food without labels, such as fresh produce, you can estimate the amount of carbohydrate they contain.

If you record your carbohydrate intake and your blood sugar levels before and two hours after eating, your diabetes care team can see how your body reacts to different meals and plan your individual medication accordingly.

## Other Nutrients

Your meals also contain **fat and protein**, however, their effects on your blood sugar levels cannot be predicted. Usually, they do not have to be tracked. Please make an appointment with your healthcare professional if you think that the fat and/or protein in your meals have a large influence on managing your blood sugar levels.

## Create your Plate

With this method, managing your blood sugar and losing weight are easy! Simply fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, which you can select from a list. On the empty half of your plate you put equal helpings of protein-rich and starchy food. There's no counting required!

## Healthy Drinking

Think about drinks, too – they can also affect your blood sugar.

- **Stay hydrated!** Fresh water is your best choice.
- **Do you like tea and coffee?** If you drink them black and without sugar, they can contribute to a healthy diet.
- **Switch to diet drinks!** Most of them have no sugar so they have no direct effect on your blood sugar.