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# Eating Healthy with Diabetes

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## Eating healthy is the first step in controlling diabetes.

- **Eat three times a day.** Eat your meals at the same time each day and do not skip meals. Eat about the same amount each day. Meals should be eaten 4-5 hours apart.
- **Limit sugar and sweets.** Eat less candy, desserts, pastries, and jelly. Drink beverages such as water, sugar-free beverages and unsweetened tea.
- **Control your intake of carbohydrates (carbs).** Carb is the main nutrient that affects blood glucose (sugar) levels. It is important to control the amount of carb that you eat. Your VA Dietitian will help you figure out the amount of carbohydrates you should aim to eat at each meal.
- **Healthy sources of carbohydrate:**
  - Whole fruit
  - Whole grain bread, cereal, pasta, rice and crackers
  - Starchy vegetables (corn, peas, potatoes, lentils, sweet potatoes, winter squash)
  - Milk and yogurt
  - Beans and legumes
- **"Not So Healthy" sources of carbohydrate:**
  - Desserts, candy, ice cream, doughnuts, cookies, pies
  - Some "Sugar-free" or "No Sugar Added" foods are made with sugar alcohol and may still raise your blood sugar
  - Refined and highly processed foods
- **Be careful with liquid carbohydrate!** Liquids that contain carb can cause seriously high glucose levels if you drink too much. Even drinks that some people think are healthy can cause problems. Liquids with carb include: sodas, fruit juice, milk, sweet tea, energy drinks, coffee drinks, sports drinks, and some flavored waters.
- **Reduce your intake of high fat foods.** Cutting back on your intake of high fat food can help reduce your weight and cholesterol levels. Reduce your intake of fried food, bacon, sausage, cold cuts, sour cream, cheese, egg yolks, stick margarine, butter, and whole milk.

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- **Increase your intake of non-starchy vegetables.** Vegetables are low in carbohydrates and calories, and high in fiber. Eat vegetables for variety, nutrition and to help fill you up.

These are some of the non-starchy vegetables:

Asparagus  
Cucumbers  
Tomatoes  
Broccoli

Green beans  
Yellow squash  
Cabbage  
Onions

Zucchini  
Carrots  
Spinach  
Lettuce

- **Eat more fiber.** To get more fiber, eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, choose whole grain bread or cereal, and eat more beans or legumes.

### Healthy lifestyle tips:

- **Limit your intake of alcohol.** Drink alcohol only with permission of your doctor. Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach as it can cause a low glucose level. The limit for men is up to two drinks a day and for women is one drink a day. Be aware that sweet mixers and juice contain carb.
- **Be more active.** Regular exercise is an important part of your diabetes care. Physical activity can help lower your blood glucose levels. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. The type and amount of activity that is right for you should be discussed with your healthcare provider. Losing weight may also help improve your glucose control.
- **Know your blood glucose levels.** You may check your blood glucose levels on an individualized basis. Your VA Dietitian can help you determine your blood glucose goals, but these are often goals for most people:

Before a meal: 80-150

Two hours after a meal: less than 180

Bedtime: 110-150