

# Ten steps to eating well with diabetes

1. **Aim for three regular meals daily.** This helps to regulate appetite and control blood glucose levels.
2. **Include starchy carbohydrates at every meal.** These include bread, pasta, potatoes, noodles, rice and cereals. Aim for fist sized portions of starchy carbohydrates as larger portions may cause high blood glucose levels. Try to include starchy carbohydrates that are slowly absorbed (have a low glycaemic index) as these will have a lower impact on blood glucose levels. These include pasta, basmati rice, granary bread, oats, and sweet potatoes.
3. **Reduce fat content** - particularly animal fats and processed meat as this type of fat is linked to heart disease. Choose unsaturated fats e.g. olive oil, vegetable oil, rapeseed oil or sunflower oil.
4. **Aim for 5 to 9 portions of fruit and vegetables daily.** These provide vitamins, fibre, antioxidants and are low in calories.  
One portion (80g) is equivalent to:
  - Tennis ball sized apple / orange / small banana
  - Small handful grapes / strawberries
  - 2 plums / satsumas / kiwis or 1 tablespoon dried fruit
  - 2-3 tablespoons vegetables
  - A small cereal bowl of salad.



5. **Include beans and lentils.** These can improve blood glucose levels and blood fats. Try adding kidney beans, butter beans, chickpeas or lentils to stews, casseroles or soups.
6. **Aim for at least two portions of fish a week (one of which should be oily).** Oily fish contain omega 3, which protects against heart disease. Try fresh or tinned (in tomato sauce or spring water as oil adds calories) mackerel, sardines, pilchards, fresh or tinned salmon or fresh tuna.
7. **Limit sugar and sugary foods.** This does not mean a sugar-free diet but use sugar sparingly. However, avoid adding sugar to drinks and use sugar-free or diet squashes and fizzy drinks. Sugary drinks can cause blood glucose levels to rise rapidly.

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8. **Reduce salt to less than 6g per day.** High levels of salt can raise blood pressure, which can increase stroke and heart disease risk. Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods such as bread, breakfast cereals, processed meats, tinned products and stock cubes. Always check the nutritional label. High: more than 1.5g salt per 100g, Low: 0.3g salt or less per 100g.
9. **If drinking alcohol, do so in moderation.** Remember that alcohol is high in calories. Try not to exceed 14 units of alcohol per week (for men and women). If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more. If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, aim to have several drink-free days a week. One unit of alcohol is equivalent to 25ml spirit, 80ml wine or half a pint of normal strength beer. Never drink on an empty stomach, as alcohol can cause hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels) when taking certain diabetes medication.
10. **Avoid diabetic foods or drinks** they offer no benefit to people with diabetes.

If you have any queries contact:

**Nutrition and Dietetic Services**

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