

Survival Skills...Healthy Eating

Does diabetes change the way I eat?

Yes, but you do not have to eat different foods than others or buy “diet” foods. It means you need to **learn healthy eating habits to help control your blood sugar, your weight and reduce your risk of problems.**



What healthy eating habits do I need to learn?

- Eat a **variety of foods** including fruits, vegetables, grains and low-fat dairy. Foods in the meat and fat group do not directly affect blood glucose.
- Keep your **weight at a healthy level.**
- **Limit fat and salt** in your meal plan.
- **Eat meals at regular times** to help keep your blood sugar levels steady.
- **Don't skip meals.**
- **Read food labels.**
- Eat the **same amount of food at the same time each day** to help keep your blood sugar levels steady.
- **Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach** – it can make your blood sugar fall too low.
- Choose baked, broiled, grilled, poached or steamed foods – **limit fried foods.**
- **Watch the serving size** of a food – check the food label.

Carbohydrate Counting

Carbohydrates (Carbs) are the **body's main source of energy.** Up to 100% of carbohydrate changes into sugar. Sugar, either naturally in starches, fruits or milk, or added extra to foods, is a carbohydrate and the body uses all carbohydrates the same way. **You cannot cut out the carbohydrate in your diet** – but you can **limit your choice of foods with added sugar.** Counting carbohydrates is a way to help you plan the amount of carbohydrate you eat and better manage your diabetes.

Carbohydrate Counting Tips:

- A “carbohydrate choice” is a portion of food that has 15 grams of carbohydrate (**1 carbohydrate choice = 15 grams of carbohydrate**).
- Carbohydrates are not bad for you – eat moderate amounts.
- It is **not which carbohydrate food** you eat, it is **how much.**
- Spread **carbohydrates evenly through the day.**
- Eat the **same amount of carbohydrates at each meal or snack** – usually 3 to 5 servings (45-75 grams) per meal and 1-2 servings (15-30 grams) per snack.
- **Diabetes will not go away if you stop eating carbohydrates.** Do not take all carbohydrates out of your meal plan. You may need to change the number of carbohydrate choices you eat each meal.
- Carbohydrate choices include breads, cereals, crackers, rice, pasta, potatoes, beans, peas, corn, fruits, fruit juices and milk.
- You do not have to stop eating sweets (like cake, cookies, and pies). **Replace sweets for a carbohydrate choice in your meal instead of adding them to your meal.** Eat sweets once in a while, not at every meal.



Talk with a Dietitian or Diabetes Educator and build a healthy meal plan that is best for you.

Please call 1-800-SENTARA (736-8272) to sign up for the “Healthy Living with Diabetes” Classes.