



West Hertfordshire
Hospitals
NHS Trust



A guide to...

Healthy Eating Guide for Adults with Type 2 Diabetes

Patient information

What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 Diabetes is a common, life long health condition that causes raised levels of glucose in the blood. This happens because the pancreas is not producing enough, or any, of the hormone insulin (whose role is to enable blood glucose to enter the body's cells to be used as an energy source). Alternatively, in some individuals insulin may not work effectively and this is known as insulin resistance.

What food affects your blood glucose levels?

Glucose in your blood comes from the carbohydrate in the foods that you eat and is also produced by the liver. This means your blood sugar levels are affected by carbohydrates but NOT protein (free of batter), fats, vegetables or salad.

What is the treatment?

Eating a balanced diet and maintaining, or obtaining, a healthy weight, are important steps in managing your diabetes, and reducing your risk of developing other illnesses, such as heart disease. In addition to the recommended diet, your doctor may prescribe tablets with, or without, insulin to help control blood glucose levels.

REMEMBER: This is not a special diet. It is a way of eating for a healthy life.

It is important that you discuss your individual needs with your dietitian, so that you can find ways of eating that fit with your lifestyle.

What are Carbohydrates and should I eat them?

Yes, carbohydrates are part of a healthy, balanced diet. Below is a table of common carbohydrates found in the diet.

You should aim to:

- **Include** some **starchy carbohydrates** at mealtimes, aim for about 1/4 plate balanced by a source of protein e.g. eggs, fish, meat, tofu and lots of coloured vegetables.
- **Avoid** foods high in **sugar** i.e. most of the foods in the 'sweet section'
- Enforce **Portion caution** with fruits, milk and yoghurt by: choosing whole fruit instead of dried or juice, aiming for one portion (handful) at a time and spread portions throughout the day.
- Having a single glass (200ml) or pot (125g) of yoghurt at a time as they contain a natural sugar called lactose but wont impact blood sugar levels unless large portions are eaten. Check the food labels and choose yogurt with less added sugar.

Starchy	Sweet
Pasta, noodles Bread Rice Potatoes Crackers Cereal, oats Flour Legumes and pulses	Milk, yoghurt (lactose) Fruit (fructose) Bakery products (pastry, cakes, biscuits) Chocolate Fizzy drinks Fruit juice Table sugar Sweets, jams, honey, syrups

Glycaemic Index (GI)

Is a measure of how quickly or slowly a carbohydrate food is digested and releases sugar in the blood. High GI foods are quickly turned into glucose. Low GI foods release their glucose into the blood more slowly and are therefore recommended for people with type 2 diabetes or insulin resistance.

How to switch to a low GI diet

- Choose breakfast cereals based on oats or bran such as sugar free muesli, porridge, bran flakes or wheat biscuits.
- Choose granary, rye, or multigrain bread. Make chapattis with wholemeal flour.
- Avoid overcooking pasta and noodles - serve when al dente.
- Choose new potatoes in their skins or sweet potatoes.
- Add beans, lentils and other pulses to soups, stews, salads and other dishes.
- Use basmati or brown rice.
- Include other grains such as pearl barley, quinoa & bulgur wheat.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and salad items.
- Avoid adding sugar, honey or syrup, try a calorie free sweetener such as Canderel, Hermesetas or Truvia.
- Avoid fruit juice, sports drinks, energy drinks and non diet soft drinks. Try sugar free squash or diet soft drink.



Managing Carbohydrate Portions

- Complement your meal with carbohydrates, rather than basing your meals around a carbohydrate. For Example add a scoop of rice to your stir fry rather than serving on a bed of rice.
- Aim for half of your plate to be made up of vegetables or salad.
- Include lean protein at lunch and evening meals (Discuss plant based protein options with your Dietitian if you are following a vegetarian/vegan diet)

If your blood sugar reading is above target, consider the following:

- The **quantity** of carbohydrate at the previous meal and/or snack? (think portion caution!)
- The **type** of carbohydrate at the previous meal and/or snack? (was it fast acting, high GI carb)
- Speak to your diabetes team if you are unsure.

Can I have snacks, if so, what?

Aim to have snacks with <10g of carbohydrates in them such as:

- 1 portion of fresh fruit e.g. 2 satsumas, 2 kiwis or 1 handful of berries/cherries
- Nuts/seeds and/or cheese.
- Vegetable sticks e.g. celery, carrot, pepper, cucumber with salsa, hummus or guacamole.
- 1 bag of salted popcorn/Pombears/Quavers/Skips.
- 1 Alpen Light Cereal Bar or Nature Valley Protein Bar.
- 3 squares dark chocolate.

Weight Loss and Heart Health

If you have type 2 diabetes and are overweight (BMI >25kg/m²) weight loss is advisable as it will help with **diabetes control and the cardio-vascular risks** associated. Weight loss can be achieved in many different ways. Reducing calories in the diet is important as well as other changes.

Fats and Oils

All fats and oils are high in calories, so if you are overweight you should restrict your intake.

Reducing your intake of unhealthy saturated fat (animal fats and processed food) and switching to healthier unsaturated fats, such as vegetable, sunflower, rapeseed or olive oils, and including oily fish in your diet twice per week can help to reduce your risk of heart disease. You should also...

- Use small measured amounts, e.g. 1 tsp oil per person, per meal, or use spray oils.
- Use skimmed or semi skimmed milk
- Avoid fried foods, cakes and pastries.
- Choose tomato instead of cream based sauces.
- Grill, microwave, cook in the oven, boil or steam food.
- Choose lean cuts of meat, and remove visible fat.
- Avoid high fat breads such as croissants, garlic bread, naan bread, foccacia, puris, parathas and fried poppadoms.
- Examples of oily fish to include twice a week are: salmon, fresh tuna, sardines, mackerel.

Alcohol

All alcohol is high in calories. If you are overweight, try to drink less alcohol.

The government guidelines state that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. However, if you chose to drink, the recommendation is no more than **14 units a week** spread across the week with some alcohol free days.

1 unit of alcohol is approximately

- One single pub measure (25ml) of spirits (ABV 40%)
- Half a pint (about 300ml) of normal strength lager, cider or beer (3.5% ABV)
- Half a standard glass (175ml) of wine (12% ABV)
- One glass (50ml) of liqueur, sherry or other fortified wine (ABV 20%)

Physical Activity

It is recommended that you should exercise moderately for at least 30 minutes daily. The health benefits include:

- Improved blood glucose control, blood pressure, levels of cholesterol (fat) in the blood, bone health, suppleness and flexibility, mood and general well being and obtaining and maintaining a healthy body weight.

Tips:

- Try to walk instead of taking the car.
- Get off the bus or train earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- Build up gradually and try setting some fitness goals which you can then reward yourself for when you achieve them.

If you are concerned or on medication, discuss any new exercise programme with your doctor or diabetes nurse.

Further information

www.diabetes.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/healthy-eating.aspx

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/GIDiet

www.bhf.org.uk/

www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving

The Dietetic Department

Sycamore House
Watford General Hospital
Vicarage Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 0HB

Tel: **01923 436 236**

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



Author	Hannah Ezekiel & Salma Zaman
Department	Nutrition and Dietetics
Ratified / Review Date	January 2022 / January 2025
ID Number	34-1188-V2

