

# Diabetes, Carbohydrates and You

## Healthy Habits to Live by With Diabetes Bulletin #4371

**P**eople with diabetes do not need special foods. Meals that are good for you are good for everyone in your family.

The meal plan that you were given by your dietitian is designed specifically for your medical needs. You may have different recommendations than someone else with diabetes, for example:

- Some people with diabetes may “count” carbohydrates.
- Other people with diabetes may use the Diabetes Food Pyramid.
- Still other people with diabetes may follow a diet that is based on an “exchange list.”

### **To stay healthy, follow these five good food and lifestyle habits:**

#### **1. Choose food with less fat and more fiber.**

- Choose foods that are low in fat.
- Use low-fat cooking methods.
- Limit the amount of butter, margarine, gravy and salad dressing you use.
- Eat more fiber-rich foods; fiber is found only in plant foods.
- Choose brown rice and whole-grain breads.
- Choose whole-grain cereals such as oatmeal or shredded wheat.

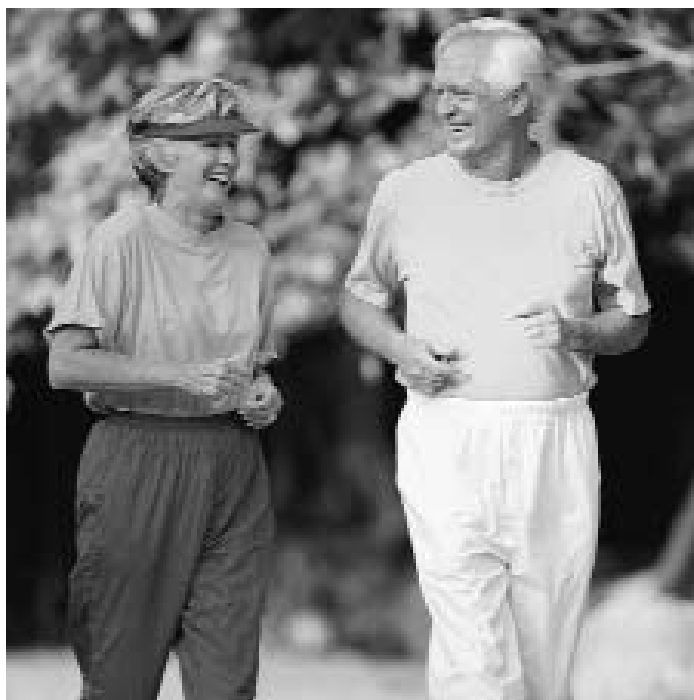
#### **2. Be physically active.**

- Being active can help you manage your weight. Losing even a small amount of weight may help control your blood sugar.
- Find opportunities to stretch, walk and move around during the day.
- Do 30 minutes or more of physical activity every day, such as walking fast, raking leaves, gardening or skiing.

#### **3. Plan menus and count carbohydrate choices.**

- Follow the meal pattern that your dietitian gave you.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- Plan meals ahead.

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- Use grain, fruit, vegetable, or milk groups for most of your carbohydrate choices.
- Limit high-sugar foods.
- If you eat high-sugar foods, be sure to count them as carbohydrate choices.

#### 4. Eat at regular times, and don't overeat.

- Eat regular numbers and sizes of food servings to help control weight.
- Don't overeat.
- Do not skip meals, regardless of whether you are on diabetes medication or not.
- Skipping meals can make you miss foods that are important to your health.
- If you take diabetes medication, skipping meals can make your blood sugar drop too low.
- Skipping meals can lead to overeating at your next meal. This would make your blood sugar level rise too high.

#### 5. Choose a variety of healthful foods.

- Follow the Diabetes Food Pyramid for help with the variety of food to eat.
- Using a food pyramid can also help you limit calories, saturated fat, cholesterol, and triglycerides.
- Note these facts about the Diabetes Food Pyramid:
  - starchy vegetables – including corn, potatoes, winter squash, dried peas, beans, and lentils – are with the grains;
  - cheese is included with the meat category; and
  - donuts and cookies are in with the fats and sugars.

#### Your healthy eating and lifestyle habits will help you

- keep your blood sugar in a good range;
- prevent heart and blood vessel disease; and
- reach and stay at a weight that is good for you.

The *Diabetes, Carbohydrates and You* fact sheet series was developed by the UMaine Cooperative Extension Diabetes Education Committee, including

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