

Healthy Eating and Diabetes

By

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Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects people's lives on a daily basis and is the MOST EXPENSIVE of the chronic diseases. With rising obesity rates, the number of people with diabetes continues to grow, but lifestyle choices can help people reduce their risk for diabetes. One of those lifestyle choices is learning to eat healthy by making some dietary changes. Here are a few to choose from:

Choose low-fat foods. Limit the amount of fat you eat by choosing more low-fat foods such as:

- beans (pinto, black, and kidney);
- fruits and vegetables;
- low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt;
- lean meats (round, sirloin, and loin), fish, and skinless poultry (chicken and turkey).

Limit salt and sodium. Reduce your consumption of salt and high-sodium foods such as canned and other processed foods. Here are a few easy steps you can take to limit your sodium intake from food.

- Buy vegetables that are fresh, plain frozen, or canned with no salt added.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meats instead of the canned or packaged options.
- Cut back on frozen dinners, canned soups, and salad dressings.
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables to wash away some of the added salt.
- Limit the amount of salt you add to your food. Instead, use lemon and herbs and spices such as garlic, dill, rosemary, basil, chives, and red pepper flakes to give your food zest!

Add fiber. To keep regular and reduce your risk for some of the complications associated with diabetes, choose more high-fiber foods. The following are just a few examples of high-fiber foods. Be sure to choose healthy foods that you and your family enjoy!

- Fruits and vegetables such as pears, apples, grapes, berries, peas, carrots, greens, and sweet potatoes
- Whole grain foods such as oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat breads and pastas
- Beans such as black, red, pinto, lima, and lentils.

Control the Carbohydrates. Limit your intake of foods high in sugar such as cakes, pies, cookies, donuts, honey, chocolate, and sugary beverages. These are all simple carbohydrates. Choose your carbohydrates from the fruits, vegetables, and grains groups, plus beans and nuts. Spread your carbohydrate intake across the day. This will help you control your portion sizes and give you more flexibility when planning your meals. Consult a registered dietitian (RD) to learn more about foods that contain complex carbohydrates & how to include them in your meal plan.

Choose Healthy and Tasty Snacks. Choose snacks that contain only small amounts of added fats and sugars. Foods that are rich in protein, and those that have complex carbohydrates such as fruits, nuts, vegetables, and whole grain foods, will leave you feeling satisfied and fuller longer. Here are some snack ideas:

- Low-fat cottage cheese and fruit
- Low-fat yogurt with granola and fruit
- Vegetables and hummus
- Unbuttered air-popped popcorn
- One hardboiled egg and whole grain crackers

Alcohol in Moderation. If you drink alcohol, consume no more than one drink (for women) or two drinks (for men) per day. One drink is:

- 5 ounces of wine, or
- 12 ounces of regular beer, or
- 1 ½ ounces of liquor

It's best to drink alcohol with food, not by itself. Always check with your pharmacist about possible interactions alcohol may have with your medications.

In summary, remember to enjoy a variety of foods from each food group everyday. This allows you to consume a balanced diet full of the essential nutrients your body needs. **Variety is the spice of life!** Also, work with a registered dietitian (RD) to create a flexible meal plan for you. Next month's column will be about taking care of yourself from head to toe if you are diabetic. You can contact the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-342-2383 (1-800-Diabetes) for more information or the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164. (Source: Healthy Eating: Nutrition & Diabetes, Linda Bobroff, December 2009)