

Diabetes-Friendly Diets

That may help You Lose Weight

- What should you eat?
- What should you reduce?
- DASH
- Mediterranean
- Paleo
- Gluten-free
- Vegetarian and vegan

The takeaway

In addition to choosing the right diet, it is important that you intend to continue the dietary improvements you make as best possible – and as often as possible. Regular exercise is crucial to your physical and mental health – even more importantly to those with diabetes. Daily activity and exercise can help maintain your weight as well as lower your blood sugar and A1C levels.

Introduction

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for everyone, but if you have diabetes, excess weight may make it harder to control your blood sugar levels and may increase your risk for some complications. Losing weight can be extra challenging for people with diabetes.

Eating healthfully while you try to reduce weight is important for everyone, but if you have diabetes, choosing the wrong diet could harm your health. Weight loss pills and starvation diets should be avoided, but there are many popular diets that may be beneficial.

What should you eat?

If you have diabetes, you should focus on eating lean protein, high-fiber, less processed carbs, some fruits, and more vegetables, low-fat dairy, and healthy vegetable-based fats such as avocado, nuts, canola oil, or olive oil. You should also limit your overall carbohydrate intake.

Generally, you should aim for fewer carbs each meal. Ideally, these would come from complex carbs , fruits, and vegetables.

The American Diabetes Association offers a comprehensive list of the best foods for those with diabetes. Their recommendations include:

Protein	Fruits and vegetables	Dairy	Grains
beans	A daily serving of fruit – best are berries	low- or nonfat milk, low-fat cheese	whole grains, such as brown rice and whole-wheat pasta
nuts	sweet potatoes	low- or nonfat yogurt, Greek yogurt	
lean Meats: chicken, fish, pork, beef (some)	Non-starchy vegetables such as asparagus, broccoli, collard greens, kale, and okra (see below)		
eggs			

Staying hydrated is also important when it comes to overall health. Choose non-caloric options such as water and un-sweet tea whenever possible.

Foods to reduce

For people with diabetes, there are certain foods that should be limited. These foods can cause spikes in the blood sugar or contain unhealthy fats.

They include:

- processed grains, such as white rice or white pasta, breads, and bread products
- Sweet drinks including juices, sodas, sweet tea, milk
- fruits with added sweeteners, including apple sauce, jam, and some canned fruits
- full-fat dairy

- fried foods or foods high in trans fats or saturated fats
- foods made with refined flour – which includes most bread products
- high calorie foods and meals with little nutrition value

(DASH) The Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension plan

The DASH plan was originally developed to help treat or prevent high blood pressure (hypertension), but it may also reduce the risk of other diseases, including diabetes. It may have the additional benefit of helping you lose weight. People following the DASH plan are encouraged to reduce portion sizes and eat foods rich in blood pressure-lowering nutrients, such as potassium, calcium, and magnesium.

The DASH eating plan includes:

- lean protein: fish, poultry
- plant-based foods: vegetables, berries, beans, nuts, seeds
- dairy: fat-free or low-fat dairy products
- grains: whole grains
- healthy fats: vegetable oils

People with diabetes on this plan are advised to reduce their sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams per day. The plan also limits sweets, sugary beverages, and red meats.

The Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet is inspired by traditional foods from the Mediterranean. This diet is rich in oleic acid, a fatty acid that occurs naturally in animal and vegetable-based fats and oils. Countries that are known for eating according to this diet pattern include Greece, Italy, and Morocco.

A Mediterranean-type diet may be successful in lowering fasting glucose levels, reducing body weight, and reducing the risk of metabolic disorder, according to a study in Diabetes Spectrum.

Foods eaten on this diet include:

- Protein: poultry, salmon and other fatty fish, eggs

- Plant-based foods: fruits, vegetables like artichokes and cucumbers, beans, nuts, seeds
- Healthy fats: olive oil, nuts such as almonds

Red meat may be consumed but should be limited to only one or two meals with red meat per month. Wine may be consumed in moderation, as it may boost heart health, but it should be limited to 1 glass daily. For health and other reasons, small amounts of wine/beer daily may offer benefits, but excesses and binge drinking are not healthy.

The paleolithic (paleo) diet

The paleo diet centers on the belief that modern agriculture is to blame for chronic disease. Followers of the paleo diet eat only what our ancient ancestors would have been able to hunt and gather.

Foods eaten on the paleo diet include:

- Protein: meat, poultry, fish
- Plant-based foods: non-starchy vegetables, berries, some fruits, seeds, nuts (excluding peanuts)
- Healthy fats: olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, walnut oil

A paleo-type diet may be a good option for people with diabetes as long as the person does not have advanced kidney disease.

The gluten-free diet

Gluten-free diets have become trendy, but for people with celiac disease, eliminating gluten from the diet is necessary to avoid damage to the colon and body. Celiac disease is an immune-system disorder that causes your immune system to attack your gut and nervous system. It also promotes body-wide inflammation, which could lead to chronic disease.

Gluten is a substance found in wheat, rye, barley, and all foods made from these grains.

While anyone with diabetes can take up a gluten-free diet, it may add unnecessary restrictions for those without celiac disease. It's also important to remember that gluten-free is not synonymous with low carb or restricted calorie. There are plenty of processed, high-sugar, gluten-free foods. There is usually no medical need to complicate meal planning by eliminating

gluten unless you need to due to a diagnosis of celiac disease, or if you feel better when avoiding gluten-containing products.

Vegetarian and vegan diets

Some people with diabetes focus on eating vegetarian or vegan diets. Vegetarian diets typically refer to diets where no meat is eaten, but animal products like milk, eggs, or butter can be consumed. Vegans will not eat meat or any other type of animal product, including honey, milk, or gelatin.

Foods that are healthy for vegetarians and vegans with diabetes include:

- Beans
- soy
- dark, leafy vegetables
- nuts
- legumes
- some fruits
- whole grains

While vegetarian and vegan diets can be healthy diets to follow, those who follow them may be missing out on vital nutrients if they aren't careful.

Some nutrients vegetarians or vegans may need to obtain through supplements include:

- Calcium. Found largely in animal products like dairy, calcium is an important nutrient that contributes to the health of bones and teeth. Broccoli and kale can help provide necessary calcium, but supplements may be needed in a vegan diet.
- Iodine. Required for metabolizing food into energy, iodine is predominantly found in seafood. Without these animal products in their diets, vegetarians and vegans may have trouble getting enough of the necessary iodine. Supplements can be beneficial.
- B-12: Since only animal products have vitamin B-12, a supplement may be necessary for those following a strict vegetarian diet.
- Zinc: The main source of zinc comes from high protein animal products, and a supplement may be advised for those on a vegetarian diet.

Common Non-starchy Vegetables

The following is a list of common non-starchy vegetables:

- Amaranth or Chinese spinach
- Artichoke
- Artichoke hearts
- Asparagus
- Baby corn
- Bamboo shoots
- Beans (green, wax, Italian)
- Bean sprouts
- Beets
- Brussels sprouts
- Broccoli
- Cabbage (green, bok choy, Chinese)
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Chayote
- Coleslaw (packaged, no dressing)
- Cucumber
- Daikon
- Eggplant
- Greens (collard, kale, mustard, turnip)
- Hearts of palm
- Jicama
- Kohlrabi
- Leeks
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Onions
- Pea pods
- Peppers
- Radishes
- Rutabaga
- Salad greens (chicory, endive, escarole, lettuce, romaine, spinach, arugula, radicchio, watercress)
- Sprouts
- Squash (cushaw, summer, crookneck, spaghetti, zucchini)
- Sugar snap peas
- Swiss chard
- Tomato