



More Wit and Wisdom for kids with diabetes
(and their parents)

Healthy Eating

Of all the things you've learned about diabetes, the thing that probably drives you the craziest is being reminded of the foods you aren't supposed to eat. If your parents don't remind you, your doctor does. If your doctor doesn't remind you, your friend asks you about it. And when no one is around to remind you, that little voice inside your head starts nagging you every time you even think about a banana split.

Can You Eat That?

Everyone with diabetes goes through a time when they wonder if they will ever eat a piece of birthday cake again. Or they're favorite bean and pork burrito. Or pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving. Or fried chicken and potato salad at the family picnic.

But once people with diabetes learn how to balance foods with the amount of insulin and exercise that's just right for them, they relax and realize they won't have to give up those favorite dishes. And they won't need people to remind them all the time either.

Once you learn the basics about healthy eating and work them into your food plan, you can use them to help control your blood sugar. You and your health care

team will develop a food plan just for you and your diabetes. It will include some of your favorite foods, foods important to your family, and the stuff you need for your body and brain to keep working. You can plan meals that your entire family can eat together. In fact, your whole family will probably start eating healthier. That's great news for everyone!

With all the choices you and your health care team have in foods, insulin, and other medicines you take, you'll be able to find a plan that fits with your life. Your food plan can have lots of flexibility and variety.

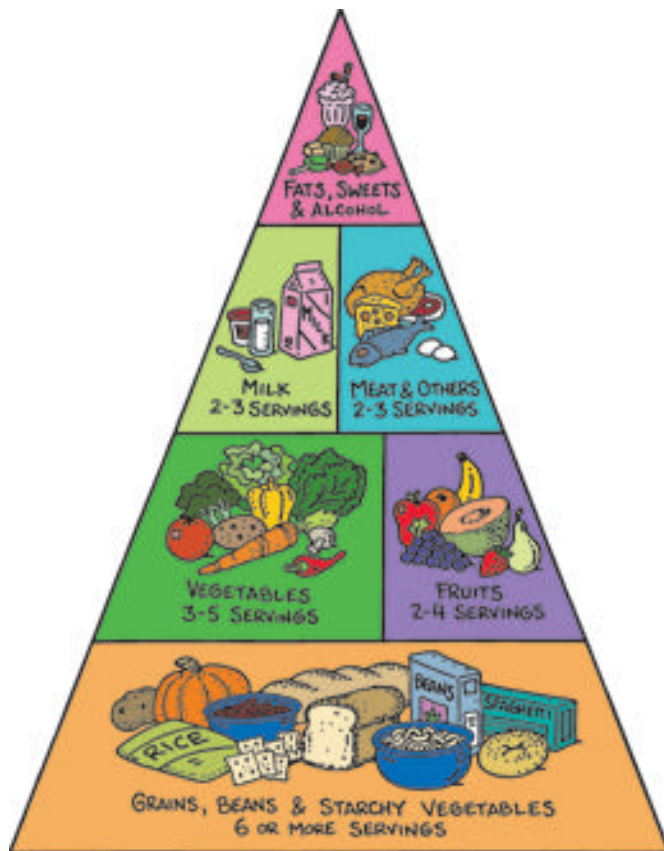
Let's Start at the Bottom

The bottom of the food pyramid, that is. This is not something built by Egyptians using all their favorite goodies. It's an easy visual way of reminding yourself what foods your body needs most and which ones it needs least. The food pyramid tells you how many "servings" of a certain type of food you ought to eat a day. Your health care team will teach you just how big a serving should be for you.

The foods needed most by your body are at the bottom of the pyramid, the

largest part. This layer contains bread, including tortillas, pita, fry bread, and good ol' sandwich bread. It also has cereal -- granola, oatmeal, muesli, and the kinds that come in boxes with prizes inside. Rice and pasta of all shapes and colors fit in this bottom part, too. A few vegetables sneak into this layer -- potatoes, peas, and corn -- because they have a lot of carbs, too.

Foods in the foundation of the pyramid contain mostly carbohydrates (which we'll call "carbs" from here on out). You need to eat six to eight servings of these breads and grains every day. Carbs show up just about everywhere else on the pyramid, too, including meats, milk, fruits, and veggies. You'll see you need some servings of these carbs, too. (The point is, carbs are everywhere!)



Right above the foundation is a layer of fruits and vegetables. Remember that these come in different forms. They might be crunchy if they are raw, like a carrot. Or squishy if they are cooked, like green beans. Or even liquid, like apple juice or V-8.

Fruits and veggies have carbs, too. But they also have plenty of vitamins and minerals. And you're going to need to eat three to five servings of vegetables and two to four servings of fruit every day.

Close to the top of the pyramid, the third layer has milk and protein in it.

Milk products include all types of milk and all kinds of cheese. Cheddar, feta, cottage, Swiss, even moldy ol' blue cheese. Yogurt falls in the milk group, too. And, guess what? The protein group includes all kinds of foods that contain a lot of protein, like meat, fish, eggs, some nuts and beans, and tofu.

Milk and protein both contain carbs, too. But they also contain a lot of protein and calcium for strong bones and teeth. Every day you need two or three servings of milk products (or something else with a lot of calcium) and the same number of protein servings.

At the top of the pyramid is a little triangle. It's little for a reason. The food group up here shouldn't be eaten very often. It's best to save these foods for special times. This layer contains the fats, oils, and sugars. It includes things like potato chips, candy, fried foods, high-fat foods (like fast food), cake, and cookies. This is the category that people love to remind you not to eat. But these are also the things that you do not have to give up completely -- as

long as you learn to balance your food intake with your insulin and exercise.

Why Bother Eating at All?

Food provides the nutrients your body needs to keep moving, thinking and growing. These are carbs, protein, and fats. Each one has a different job to do.

Eating carbs is like filling up with gas. Right away, you have energy. Your digestive system takes carbs and turns them into sugar quickly and easily. That sugar is what feeds all the cells in your body. The bottom two layers of the food pyramid have the foods with a lot of carbs. Sweeteners like sugar, honey, molasses, and syrup are also carbs. Foods high in carbs are the ones that raise your blood sugar levels the most. (That's really important—read that twice!)

Proteins act like tools for your body. They repair and build tissue to keep you strong. They keep you growing. Proteins can also be used for fuel but it takes twice as long to change proteins to sugar. (Remember meat, peanut butter, nuts, eggs, tofu, and some kinds of beans give you protein.)

Fats are used for energy reserves. Like having extra fuel in case of emergency. Fats help your body absorb certain vitamins and help the cells send signals to the rest of the body. But that doesn't take a lot of fat every day. You get fats by eating butter and margarine, oils, most meats, eggs, whole milk, chocolate, and any foods cooked in butter or oil.

Even though fats can be used as fuel, they have way more calories than carbs or proteins. They can also clog your blood vessels, which is really bad for your heart. Everyone needs a little bit of fat—for “emergencies”-- but you want to be careful that you don't carry around too much! So, now you can see why fats are

in the smallest part of the food pyramid -- because they are the smallest part of what you need in your food plan.

Count or Exchange?

Making a food plan based on the food pyramid sets up a healthy way to eat. It'll work for you, for your family, for your friends, for just about everyone -- whether they have diabetes or not. The trick you need to learn is to keep track of what you eat and make necessary adjustments to control your diabetes.

There are at least three ways of keeping track of what you eat for meals and snacks -- carb counting, using exchanges, and counting calorie points. The important thing is not which system you use. The important thing is learning to balance the amount of insulin with the amount of food you eat and knowing how to use your own system well enough to include foods that are important to your family.

Your doctor, dietitian, and others on your health care team will help you learn a system to keep track of what you eat. They'll work with you while you learn the system and get used to your food plan. As always, it will be important to keep track of your blood sugar levels. Changes in your food plan and insulin can stop some of those highs and lows you might have. Your health care team knows how important it is for the system and food plan to fit your schedule, your activities, and the foods you like. They can teach you how to make adjustments in your fast-acting insulin for the times when you eat extra carbs. When it's a good fit, you and your diabetes will get along well.

Portions are Important!

Keep portion size in mind. Your food plan may allow you to have a muffin for breakfast. But you know there's a big difference in the amount of carbs in a little bitty muffin and one the size of a softball. It's not that you can't eat the muffin the size of a softball—you just need to know how many carbs or exchanges are in it and count them.

When you first get started, you might want to measure or weigh everything you eat to ensure you're portion sizes are about right. Most Americans eat servings that are about twice an actual portion size (just take a look at what you get the next time you go to a restaurant!).

Learning to “eyeball” portions can help. For example, it's easy to remember that a ½ cup serving looks like a half a baseball sitting on your plate. Or, a 4 ounce bagel is about as big around as a cd/dvd. You'll find some more than twice that big! Portion sizes vary from person to person, though, depending on age, size, and more. Check with your dietician to find out what portions you should eat.

Making Differences Work

Often there are other things people think about besides diabetes when working out a food plan with their health care team. Allergies keep some people from eating certain foods. A person's religious traditions can determine what they eat or don't eat. Your family's background might make some foods much more important than others. And some people choose to be vegetarian so they need to learn how to get protein by eating foods other than meat.

Special considerations such as these need to be discussed with your health

care team while you are setting up your food plan. Your food plan is called yours for a reason. To be successful, it needs to be designed to fit your lifestyle (how you live). Tell your health care team about your favorite foods, about the foods your parents usually serve, about special foods your family eats at celebrations, and even about the foods you absolutely hate. Then tell them about how you work all this food off -- what you do for fun and exercise. All this information will help make sure the food plan you go home with is the one for you. The one that will make controlling your diabetes easier.

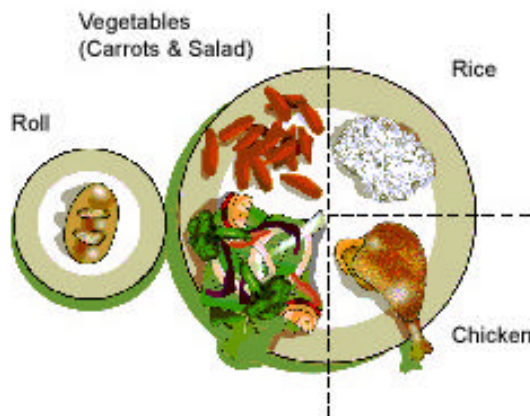
Final Bits & Pieces

- ★ Adjusting to a food plan takes much longer than creating one. Give yourself time to adjust. Don't be too hard on yourself if you goof up. Your health care team will help you learn how to handle mistakes.
- ★ Ask your health care team for some easy ways to remember serving sizes and measurements (for example, one serving-sized apple or orange is about the size of a tennis ball.)
- ★ Help whoever cooks in your house plan meals. That way you can include some of your favorites. And when a special occasion comes up, say a very special occasion like your birthday, your food plan for the day can be juggled to include a piece of cake or ice cream.
- ★ Find foods you can snack on with your friends. When they have a soda, you have a diet soda. You can all have lowfat chips, pretzels,

airpopped popcorn, fresh fruit, and yogurt.

- ★ Snacks are part of your food plan. Don't forget them. Snacks are important to avoid low blood sugars (reactions) between meals. They can also help prevent high blood sugars because food is spread out more evenly through your day. And that matches how insulin works.
- ★ Eat by the clock. Remember, insulins such as NPH have "peaks." Your health care team can help you avoid reactions by making sure you've eaten enough to handle the insulin when it's working strongest.
- ★ Brownies or bicycles? People eat for a lot more reasons than just to survive. Eating gives us the chance to get together with other people and share. But so do a lot of other things. Instead of diving into a carton of ice cream when your friend comes over, play a game. That way you'll stick to your food plan, have a great time, and won't have to worry about talking with your mouth full!
- ★ Be ready to change your food plan as you and your activities change. Growing, which tends to happen a lot, or starting a new sport will throw a kink into how well your food plan works. Adjustments will need to be made. Call your health care team for advice.
- ★ A quick and easy way to judge if you're eating the right amounts from the best layers of the pyramid is to "Rate Your Plate." Draw a couple of imaginary lines to divide your plate. About one-fourth of your plate should be filled with carbs (bread, rice, pasta, or cereal). Another fourth can be

protein (meat, fish, tofu, etc.). That leaves half your plate you can fill with veggies and fruit. Finish your



meal with milk or yogurt.

Remember, though, to count the carbs or exchanges in everything you eat!

- ★ You can learn more about the food pyramid and download pyramids for different cultures, lifestyles, and diets at the USDA Web site. Visit them at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html.

Try Your Hand at Cooking

Ready to get started eating cooking healthy foods? Start with this simple recipe, and then take it from there!

Easy Cheese Popcorn¹

You'll Need:

- 10 cups microwave popcorn
- 3 oz. (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) shredded, reduced fat cheddar cheese
- large cookie sheet
- spatula

¹ Adapted from *The Diabetes Snack, Munch, Nibble, Nosh Book*, copyright 1998 by the American Diabetes Association. Purchase this book online at store.diabetes.org.

pot holder/hot pad

Do this:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Remove any unpopped kernels from the popcorn, and spread it on the cookie sheet. The popcorn should cover the bottom in a single layer, with as few open spaces as possible.
2. Slowly, sprinkle the cheese over the popcorn, being careful to keep the cheese on the popcorn (it'll be a waste of cheese and a big mess if it gets on the cookie sheet!). Bake for 3 to 4 minutes or until the cheese has melted onto the popcorn. Loosen any stuck cheese from the bottom of the pan with a spatula, and cool the popcorn in the pan on a wire rack before eating.

The popcorn will keep about 2 to 3 days in an airtight container.

Carbs: 6g
Exchanges: ½ Starch
 ½ Saturated Fat
Calories: 58
Total fat: 2g
Calories from fat: 19

Download more tasty recipes from our Web site at diabetes.org/wizdom/pod.

To Learn More:

- ★ **Wizdom:** If you don't already have it, order the American Diabetes Association Wizdom™ kit for your family. They're free to kids with diabetes and are available by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383).
- ★ **Magazines:** Diabetes Forecast is a monthly magazine published by the ADA for people with diabetes and their

families. It's free to members of the American Diabetes Association. Pick up a copy at your local bookstore, or become an ADA member by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES.

- ★ This piece is one in a series about kids and diabetes. We have titles about type 2 diabetes in kids, school, family, discrimination, and more. Call us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383) or download them by logging on to <http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/pod.asp>
- ★ For more information on kids and diabetes, log onto our Web site at <http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/>
- ★ Parents! Subscribe to our Wizdom Parents' E-newsletter by sending an e-mail to wizdom@diabetes.org.
- ★ Questions or comments? Send us an e-mail at wizdom@diabetes.org