

Balanced Eating for Better Blood Sugars

Your COMPLETE Guide to Diabetes Nutrition

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Hi, I'm Mary Ellen.

I'm the registered dietitian behind milkandhoneynutrition.com. I create content and resources for people with all types of diabetes and I've been living with type 1 diabetes since I was 5 years old.

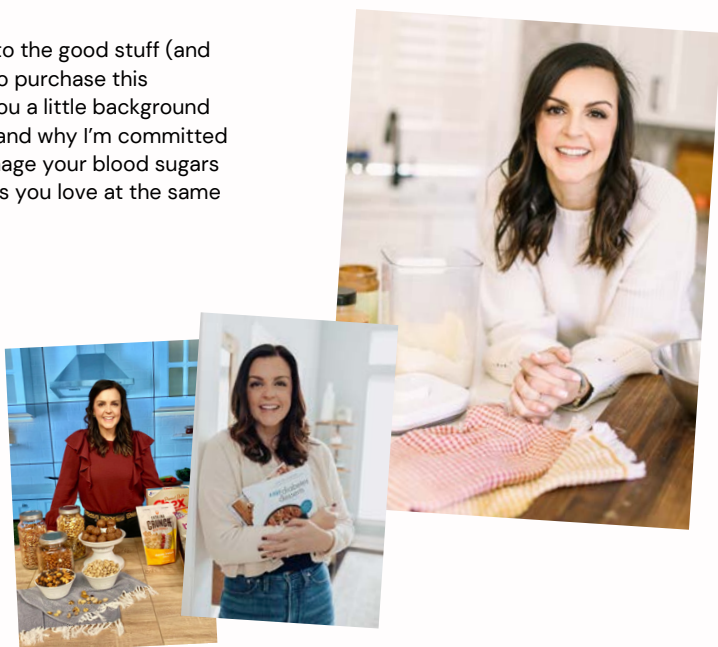
I'm excited you're here and even more excited to dive into the basics (and some not so basics) of eating for blood sugar balance and diabetes management... Including all the foods you know and love.

A diabetes diagnosis is not the end of delicious food. I'm here to help you bring some joy back to your kitchen and eating experiences!

But before we get to the good stuff (and why you decided to purchase this program), I'll give you a little background on my experience and why I'm committed to helping you manage your blood sugars and enjoy the foods you love at the same time.

I grew up in the heart of the 1990s at the peak of diet culture and food restriction. And, this culture and viewpoint was especially detrimental to people living with diabetes at the time.

Over the years, much of my diabetes management was focused on weight management, and taking as little insulin as possible... Instead of helping me learn how to use insulin to manage my blood sugars and enjoy the foods I love.



I was diagnosed at such a young age, that I didn't know anything different. All I knew was life with diabetes and food restriction.

Fast forward several years, and around 10 years old I was able to switch from older insulin formulations that required I eat the same things everyday, to rapid acting analog insulins that allowed so much more freedom with the foods I could eat. It was around this same time, I really started to develop an interest in cooking and making food that worked for me.

My grandmother, who was one of the best cooks and bakers you've ever met, taught me how to make my first cheesecake, and there was no looking back. I fell in love with baking, and learning how to make food that was blood sugar friendly, but also just as delicious as the "real thing."

In college, I decided to major in nutrition once I found out I could actually make a career out of showing people how blood sugar friendly foods can still taste amazing!

Over the course of my 15+ years as a registered dietitian, I've noticed that many people with diabetes are still taught to eat the same ways I was as a kid in the early 1990s. But our medications, treatment options, and medical management strategies have changed... so why haven't the foods we recommend changed along with it?

People living with diabetes should not be destined to a life of boring food. I'm here to tell you there is another way! A way to actually enjoy the food you eat and balance your blood sugars at the same time.

Two keys to successful blood sugar management

There are two key things that help people living with diabetes be successful at managing their blood sugars:

- They are educated on how food effects their own individual body.
- They truly enjoy the food they are eating.



Tools & resources

Before we get started and dive in, I want to direct you to some additional resources that may provide some extra help and support.

Website

Most likely, if you purchased this ebook, you're aware of all of the resources available for free over on milkandhoneynutrition.com.

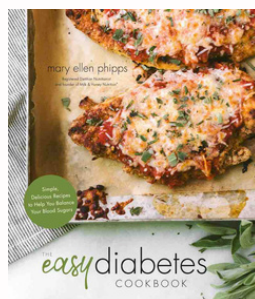
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Cookbooks

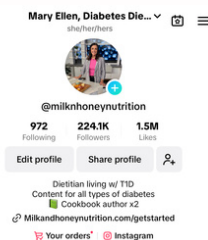
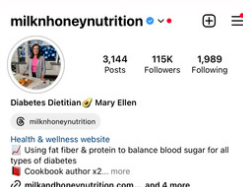
Both of my cookbooks take the principles we'll discuss and cover in this toolkit, and put them into practice... with 120 recipes combined between the two cookbooks.



Social Media

Whether you prefer Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or Pinterest... I've got you covered.

You can find me as [@milkhoneynutrition](https://www.instagram.com/milkhoneynutrition) on all of those platforms.



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Just a quick reminder before we get started...

The information you are going to read and learn on the following pages is not a substitute for medical care. Read through these resources to learn some key principles about eating for balanced blood sugars... and then take this information and discuss it with your doctor or registered dietitian.

You should always consult your physician or dietitian before doing any of the following:

- Changing your diet
- Starting or adjusting your exercise routine
- Adjusting medications
- Starting, adjusting, or stopping a dietary supplement

Balancing Blood Sugars

Why does It matter?



Different types... ... same end goal.

There are many different types of diabetes, different causes, and different medication and management strategies. But at the end of the day, we all have the same end goal in mind...

Keep blood sugars in range as often as possible.

It's important to remember that when we look at the different types of diabetes, we are really looking at different diseases.

None is worse or better than the other. They all have different causes, symptoms, and treatments, but can ultimately have the same end result on the body.

Diabetes mellitus, all types, is a disease that prevents the body from properly absorbing the carbohydrates you eat, either because the pancreas does not make insulin, or the insulin the pancreas does make is not effective.



What does it mean to balance blood sugars?

"Balanced blood sugars" means blood sugar levels are within the recommended range as often as possible and are not changing at rapid rates.

Why does this matter?

Consistently out of range and/or rapidly changing blood sugars are associated with increased complications from diabetes.

So what do we do?

We take medications when needed and adjust lifestyle factors like how we...

- Sleep
- Manage stress
- Move our bodies
- ... and eat

... to help blood sugar levels stay in range as often as possible and fluctuate less.

Your Diabetes Nutrition Toolbox



Managing diabetes is like building a house...

We all have the same end goal in mind to build a functional house (aka, manage blood sugars effectively), but it's going to look different for each of us. There are thousands of different ways a well built house can look... and similarly, there are many different ways to effectively manage diabetes.

To build our house, we all have a toolbox filled with tools.

There's multiple tools that can get the same job done. You get to choose which tools work best for you. Different people are going to prefer different tools based on their own lived experiences and preferences. And, it's ok if you prefer different tools than someone else. There is not one right way to manage diabetes.

So, as we dive into our diabetes nutrition toolbox, remember that your journey and toolbox may look different than other people's and that's ok.

My job as a registered dietitian is to show you all of your options for nutritional tools and then you and your healthcare team get to decide what is best for you.



Addition (not restriction)

What can we add to our food?

Many of the nutritional tools we will talk about in this ebook and that we use to help manage diabetes and blood sugar levels are actually contrary to what most people are taught.

Many people approach diabetes and blood sugars as if foods are either:

- Good or bad
- Ok or not ok
- Healthy or not healthy

This creates the idea that there are a list of foods we cannot eat. A list of foods that are off limits. So, we're constantly looking at the food we're eating, thinking what can I NOT have? What do I need to take out?

But, that just gets exhausting and limits the foods we choose from.

The better way to approach eating for blood sugar management is a mindset of addition. Looking at the foods that we love and enjoy and that help us feel our best... and asking:

- What can I add to this to make it better for my blood sugars?
- What else is needed to help my body digest this better?

So as we continue, we're going to identify nutritional tools that we can add to our meals, snacks, and more... Making our food work for us and not the other way around.



Fat, fiber, & protein

One of the most important concepts to understand when we're thinking about addition and not restriction is how we eat carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are totally ok to eat... but we don't want to eat them on their own.

Carbohydrate digestion happens very quickly. Quicker than with any other macronutrient (carbs, fats, and proteins). And, when digestion happens too quickly, we're less likely to have stable blood sugars.

So, we need to think of foods and ingredients that we can add to our meals and snacks that can help slow down digestion.

Fat, fiber, and protein act as "buffers" on your body's blood sugar response. They slow down how quickly your body can absorb sugar and other forms of carbohydrate. This means the highest blood sugar your body will reach after eating should be lower when fat, fiber, and protein are included (see the next page for a picture). You are also less likely to experience steep blood sugar swings, and better able to achieve blood sugar balance when adding in fat, fiber, and protein sources.

So, where do you start? First, pay attention to these nutrients. Get in the habit of asking yourself, "Ok, do I have fat, fiber, and protein in this meal or snack?" And second, try to avoid eating carbohydrates by themselves. Make sure you're adding in that fat and protein, and choosing carbohydrates that have fiber in them.

After that, it's up to you to note how you feel after eating. What is your energy level like two hours later? Are you still satisfied or already hungry again? Are you able to think clearly or are you experiencing a little bit of brain fog? And if you have a blood sugar meter to use, test your blood sugar about two hours after you eat and see where you're at. And then make note of what you ate... was it more fat, more protein, both?

Now, I would imagine that you're hoping I'll give you some exact numbers to look for here. But, I can't. Each and every person with diabetes, prediabetes, metabolic syndrome, or any other condition that warrants pursuing blood sugar balance is different. One person may need more fat to balance their blood sugars while another may need more protein or fiber.

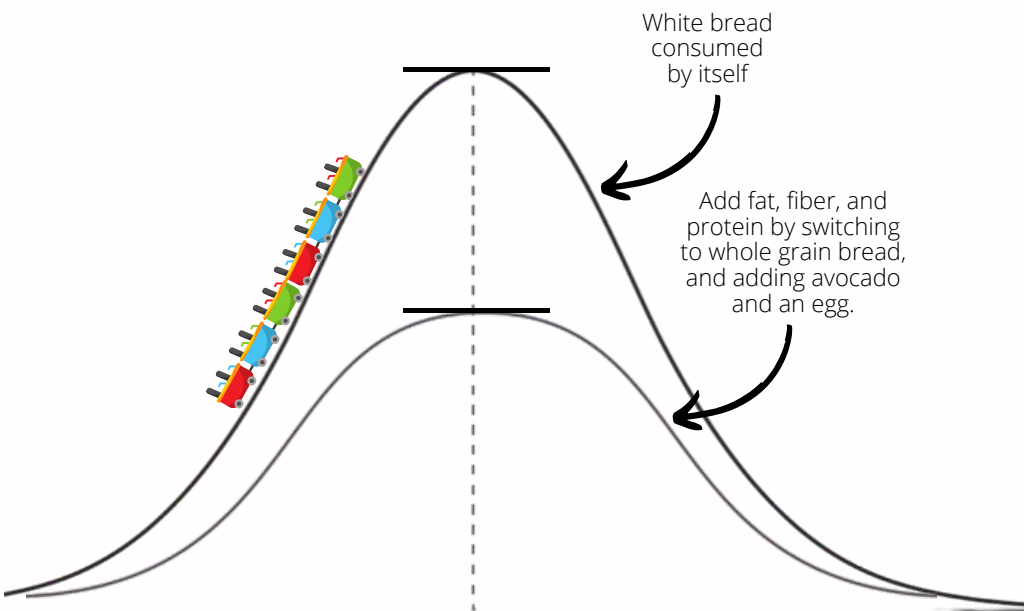
In the following sections, we'll go through different ways to add these nutrients into your routine.

Fat, fiber, & protein

Sugar and starch are the quickest acting carbohydrates and will raise blood sugars very quickly. So, when we can balance that out with fat, fiber, and protein, we are more likely to achieve blood sugar balance.

Think of it like a roller coaster. Consuming sugar or starch without any fat, fiber, or protein results in a really quick rise in blood sugar and then an equally quick fall.

But if we have some fat, fiber, or protein on board, these can act as buffers on this response. They help to “flatten the curve” of the blood sugar response as shown below.





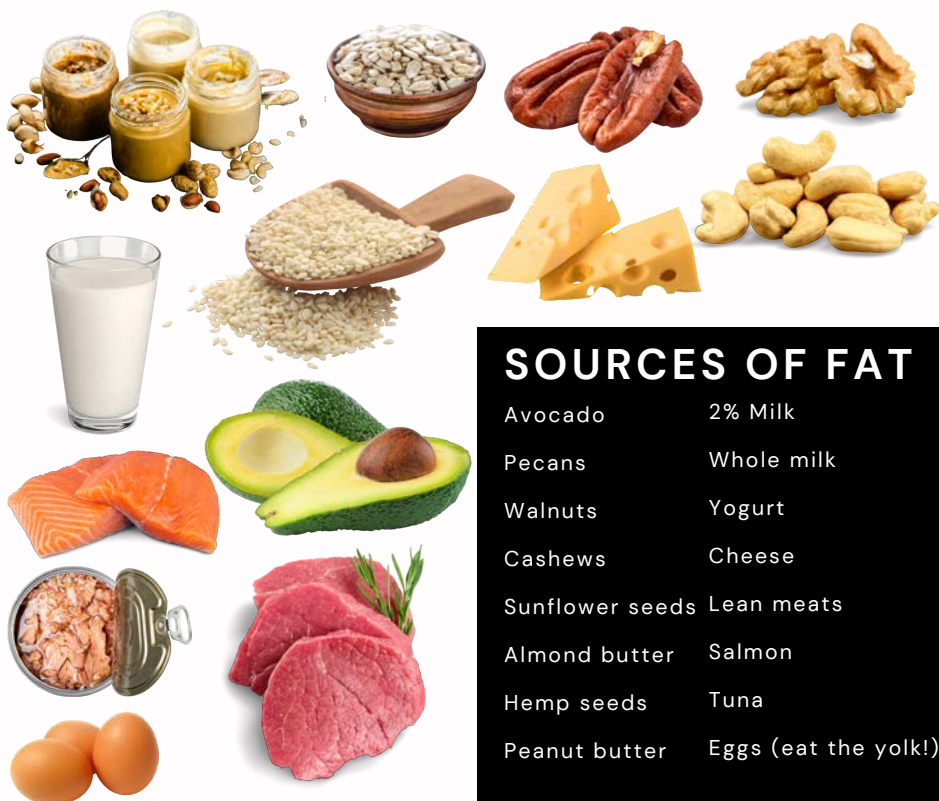
Fat

Fat often gets a bad rep and becomes feared by many, grabbing the non-fat or low-fat options at the grocery store or coffee shop. However, fat is a vital macronutrient essential in everyone's daily diet.

For instance, some vitamins are fat-soluble (Vitamins A, D, E, K), which means we need to eat healthy sources of fat to absorb the goodness of these specific vitamins. So eating avocado or salad dressing on a salad will function both for flavor and aiding the absorption of those fat-soluble vitamins.

Fat helps keep us full and satiated. This is simply because this macronutrient takes longer to exit the stomach, so when your meals or snacks contain fat, they help keep you satisfied longer and keep hunger away.

Sources of healthy fats



SOURCES OF FAT

Avocado	2% Milk
Pecans	Whole milk
Walnuts	Yogurt
Cashews	Cheese
Sunflower seeds	Lean meats
Almond butter	Salmon
Hemp seeds	Tuna
Peanut butter	Eggs (eat the yolk!)



Fiber

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate. In fact, it's the non-digestible portion of carbohydrate, meaning it passes right on through your GI tract with minimal absorption. Fiber is found in plant based foods and is one of the main reasons eating plants is so good for you. Diets higher in fiber have been linked to lower disease risk and rates, as well as improved mental and GI health. Consistent high fiber intake can also make it easier to manage existing diseases, like diabetes.

There are two types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. Most plant foods contain a combination of both types of fiber.

Strictly speaking, soluble fiber will dissolve in water when it passes through the GI tract, forming a gel like substance and if taken in therapeutic amounts (ie, a powder you buy from the store) it may aid in "stopping you up" if needed. Soluble fiber has been linked in research to less blood sugar spikes and various metabolic/GI health benefits.

Insoluble fiber does not dissolve in water and passes through your GI tract almost fully intact. It adds bulk to stools and may help you have bowel movements more easily.

The average American only consumes 10–15g fiber per day though. And, the American Heart Association recommends 25g of fiber or more per day. But, if you're looking to add more fiber to your diet to get to that 25g mark, make sure that you increase the amount of fiber you eat gradually ... overloading your GI tract with fiber when you're not used to eating lots of fiber can have some pretty uncomfortable side effects.



HIGH FIBER FOODS

Apples	Brussel sprouts
Bananas	Artichoke
Oranges	Turnip greens
Mango	Carrots
Strawberries	Beans
Raspberries	Lentils
Avocado	Split peas
Passionfruit	Walnuts
Guava	Chia seeds
Blackberries	Peanuts
Pomegranate	Almonds
Persimmons	Pecans
Blueberries	Oats
Green peas	Quinoa
Broccoli	Popcorn
Potatoes (with skin)	Whole grain bread
Barley	

Protein

Generally speaking, people with diabetes do not need any more or any less protein than people who don't have diabetes. Increased protein, however, may help improve blood sugar management because it can reduce and balance carbohydrate intake.

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that anywhere from 10–35% of calories come from protein (assuming your kidneys are healthy).

My professional diabetes dietitian opinion leans closer to the 35% recommendation. (As in, people with diabetes and healthy kidneys should have about 30–35% of calories coming from protein). This would equal around 100–170g protein per day depending on your own individual needs and characteristics.

To determine your personal needs and what is best for you, consult a registered dietitian.

Protein can be derived from animal-based sources such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy. Protein can also be derived from plant-based sources such as whole grains, legumes, beans, nuts, and seeds.

PROTEIN SOURCES

Eggs
Beef
Ground Meat
Cheese
Shrimp
Chicken
Milk
Greek Yogurt
Cottage Cheese
Salmon
Tuna
Pork
Quinoa
Oatmeal
Barley
Farro
Tofu
Tempeh
Beans
Lentils
Almonds
Cashews
Peanut butter





A note on sugar

Many people living with diabetes have a fear of sugar and wrongfully assume they can't eat or drink anything with sugar in it.

Because sugar can raise your blood sugar/glucose levels quickly (which can cause a blood sugar spike and unstable blood sugars), we want to find ways to slow down how quickly it can raise your blood sugar level.

Eating foods that contain fat, fiber, and protein along with foods that contain sugar will slow down how quickly your body can digest that sugar. This is what we want, and when you learn how to choose these foods and pair them together, it becomes a lot easier to maintain stable blood sugar levels and still enjoy the foods you love.

Natural sugar v. Added sugar

I like to ask myself, "what kind of company does the sugar I'm eating keep? What other nutrients come along with it?"

Because naturally occurring sugars come along with sources of fat, fiber, and protein, your body may digest them slower than added sugars. Foods with added sugars may not always offer significant sources of fat, fiber, and protein. Some do, and some don't.

Because of this, I recommend following the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans... 10% or less of your calories should come from added sugar. This means approximately 50g or less of added sugar/day.



Foods that promote stable blood sugars

In addition to identifying foods that contain fat, fiber, and protein to add to our diets, there's also a long list of foods that when eaten consistently over time, research has shown to be associated with improved blood glucose levels. All of these foods offer fat, fiber, or protein... and many offer more than one!



Broccoli
Carrots
Onions
Spinach
Beets
Celery
Brussel sprouts
Cauliflower
Asparagus
Artichokes

Grapes
Apples
Prunes
Blueberries
Strawberries
Blackberries
Raspberries
Tart cherries
Pears
Avocados

Tofu
Greek yogurt
Cottage cheese
Edamame
Beans
Lentils

Lean beef
Chicken breast
Salmon
Tuna
Tilapia
Shrimp
Eggs

Almonds & almond butter
Peanuts & peanut butter
Walnuts
Pistachios
Pecans
Pumpkin seeds
Sunflower seeds
Hemp seeds
Chia seeds

Oats
Quinoa
Brown rice
Buckwheat
Farro
Popcorn
Barley
Wheat berries



Examples

Toast

Instead of eating just a plain piece of white bread you could add butter for fat, swap it out for a piece of whole grain toast to add fiber, add avocado for fat and fiber, add an egg on top for fat and protein, or add a nut butter to add fat and some protein.



Oatmeal

Instead of eating oatmeal plain, try adding nuts or nut butter for fat and fiber, fruit for fiber, or Greek yogurt for protein.



Rice or pasta

Make rice or pasta more blood sugar friendly by adding a protein source like meat or tofu, or a fat source like avocado or eggs.



Milk

Switch from skim milk to 2% or whole milk to add fat.



Let's practice...

On the left, we have common higher carb foods. List out sources of fat, fiber, or protein on the right that you can pair them with to create a blood sugar friendly meal.











Additional blood sugar tips



Resistant starch

Resistant starch is exactly what it sounds like. It is starch that is resistant to digestion. It functions very similarly to soluble fiber in the body. So you guessed it, this means it can be a helpful tool in managing blood sugars.

The way we prepare certain starchy foods impacts how much resistant starch they have. Cooking often destroys resistant starch. But, we can get some of it back in some foods if we cool them down fully after cooking them.

Yes, you read that correctly, foods like rice, pasta, and potatoes can become more blood sugar friendly by cooling them down completely after cooking (I recommend sticking them in the fridge overnight). And, some research even shows additional resistant starch is formed when you reheat these foods.

A great way to put this into practice is to make large batches of things like potatoes, rice, and pasta at the beginning of the week and store them in the fridge to be used in meals during the week. Not only does this save time in prepping meals, but it also makes your meals more blood sugar friendly and helps you enjoy starchy foods that you may have thought were off limits.

A note on insulin and medication dosing

The most common question I get about resistant starch is do you still dose insulin and medication the same? While I will always tell you to double check with your healthcare team, usually the answer is yes.

Remember our blood sugar roller coaster analogy? All we're doing with resistant starch is flattening the curve just like if we were adding fat, fiber, or protein. The overall number of carbohydrates is going to stay the same... We're just changing the type of carbohydrates, or at least some of them, to be more blood sugar friendly and result in a slower blood sugar response rather than a rapid rise and fall.

Resistant starch can be found in...

Cooled rice	Reheated pasta	Overnight oats
Reheated rice	Cooked beans	Hi-maize flour
Cooled potatoes	Potato starch	
Reheated potatoes	Green bananas	
Cooled pasta	Previously frozen bread	

The order you eat your food in...

Believe it or not, the order in which you eat your food can help your body process carbohydrates better.

Research has shown that eating non-starchy veggies (like greens in a salad) and protein before a higher carb food item (like pizza, pasta, rice, etc.) may help promote more stable blood sugars.

For some meals like pizza, where you can easily eat a side salad or non-starchy vegetables first, this will make sense.

However, if having to sort out the order in which you eat your food is going to negatively impact your eating experience (things like mixed dishes where everything's all together in one bowl) then this isn't necessarily something to stress about.



Hard to Eat Foods and Drinks



Pizza

Pizza and diabetes can be tricky to navigate, but it is possible to enjoy your favorite slice of pizza while managing your diabetes.

Yes, pizza contains carbohydrate, and often a good deal of carbohydrates. We want to focus on how to tweak or manipulate that rise in blood sugar to happen at a speed that we're comfortable with. In other words, we'll focus on how to have a nice steady rise and then fall in blood sugar instead of a rapid spike or the dreaded "delayed spike" often associated with pizza.

The high fat content of pizza causes your GI tract to take an extra long time to digest pizza (also a reason you may feel sleepy after eating pizza), so blood sugars seem fine, or may even drop low, initially. But, a few hours later you see a large blood sugar spike.

How to make pizza more blood sugar friendly

1. Choose a frozen pizza and prepare it at home. (See our discussion on resistant starch a few pages before this for more info.)
2. Choose a higher fiber or whole grain crust.
3. Add non-starchy veggies and lean proteins as toppings.
4. Have a fiber-rich food like a side salad or non-starchy vegetable BEFORE eating your pizza.
5. Eat a protein source before eating your pizza.
6. Eat your pizza last.
7. Speak with your doctor about adjusting your insulin dosing (if on insulin) to accommodate for some of the issues we experience with pizza. (This can include an extended pre-bolus time, a split bolus, or an extended bolus.)



Sushi

Sushi is not only delicious, but incredibly nutrient dense.

Sushi can feel unapproachable because it's high-carb. But you can still have sushi with diabetes.

Many nutrient rich ingredients are used in sushi...

- Fish
- Seaweed (nori)
- Ginger
- Avocado
- Cucumber
- Citrus

These foods are high in healthy fats, vitamins, and fiber.

Depending on what sushi you eat, the amount of carbs will vary. Pay attention to what ingredients and sauces are used so you can accurately count your carbohydrates (if needed).



Sushi rice

Sushi rice is made with short-grain white rice and seasoned with rice vinegar, sugar, and salt. Its flavor pairs well with the raw fish and the stickiness helps it all stay together.

But, because of this, sushi rice can be high in sugar. Sushi rice can have up to 1 tablespoon of sugar (13 g CHO) in one roll.

Blood sugar tips for sushi

1. Choose rolls with veggies and lean protein like fish.
2. Enjoy a non-starchy veggie before eating your sushi.
3. Be aware of the types of sauces you choose and if they contain additional carbohydrates.
4. Talk to your doctor about an extended pre-bolus time if dosing insulin.

Ingredient	Serving Size	Carb Count
Sushi Rice	1 cup	66 g
Eel sauce	1 Tbsp	7 g
Eel (Unagi)	1 oz	4 g
Teriyaki sauce	1 Tbsp	3 g
Tempura batter	1 cup	22 g
Tamago	1 piece	5 g
Pickled ginger	15-20 pieces	4 g
Imitation Crab Meat (Kani)	5 sticks	8 g

Charcuterie/Grazing Boards

I know this isn't one particular food, but this type of situation where there's some sort of charcuterie board or grazing board or snacking situation can be difficult for people with diabetes... Especially those who need to dose insulin. So, I want to share my tips and tricks for both what foods to choose off of the boards and how to keep track of how much carbohydrate you're consuming if you need to dose Insulin.

Foods to choose from a charcuterie board

- Veggies
- Fruit
- Meats
- Cheese
- Nuts
- Low fat dips
- Olives

Now, by this point you've gathered that no foods are off-limits in my mind for people with diabetes... However for this particular situation, there are certain foods that can make maintaining stable blood sugars more difficult.

Foods to limit or avoid from a charcuterie board

- Jellies
- Candied nuts
- Sweets

Strategies for navigating a charcuterie board and keeping stable blood sugars

1. Make yourself a plate and sit down to eat it away from the charcuterie board. This allows you to keep better track of the amount of carbohydrate you consume.
2. Eat the veggies and other fiber sources you choose first.
3. Eat the protein sources next or in combination with your carbohydrate sources (ex: crackers).
4. Remember to avoid stacking insulin doses. This can put you at a greater risk of hypoglycemia.



Desserts

Navigating homemade desserts

Just because you have diabetes, doesn't mean you can't eat dessert! In fact, some of my all time favorite diabetes desserts are better than any "regular" dessert you've ever had.

Growing up, I was your typical child of the 90's constantly confronted with diet products and ads. And, on top of that, I was growing up with type 1 diabetes. I was constantly told dessert was bad for me and I should avoid it. Because of this, I tried a lot of "sugar free" and "diabetes friendly" desserts over the years. Most of them either tasted gross or were too complicated to make at home.

But, as I got older I realized there were many different ways to make both a tasty and blood sugar friendly dessert. I developed a love for baking at home and finding delicious store bought diabetes desserts as well. So much so that I even wrote a cookbook about it!

Ideally, diabetes desserts should have one or more of the following things compared to traditional desserts:

- Increased protein
- More fiber
- Less saturated fat
- Less sugar



How to make more blood sugar friendly desserts at home

1. Cut the sugar. Many recipes still taste delicious even if you cut the sugar by up to half!
2. Use alternative flours. Flours like almond, coconut, oat, and chickpea offer a delicious texture, less carbs, more protein, more fiber, and more plant based fat.
3. Add in plain Greek yogurt for additional protein.
4. Swap out your fat source. Instead of using butter, try using nut butter or avocado. This decreases saturated fat and increases plant based fats (and fiber).
5. Don't be afraid to try non-traditional ingredients. Adding things like beans, veggies, and more can improve the nutritional profile of your desserts... and yes, their flavor can be totally masked by flavorings and sweeteners.



Desserts

If you're looking to cut back on the sugar in a recipe but aren't satisfied with how the end product tastes, there are things you can add to your recipes that enhance their perceived sweetness.

How to make desserts taste sweeter without adding additional sugar

1. Add extracts like vanilla extract and almond extract.
2. Add sea salt. I know this one sounds a little weird but adding a small amount of salt actually enhances the perceived sweetness. There's a reason dark chocolate sea salt is such a popular flavor combo.
3. Add citrus zest. Everything from lemon to lime to orange zest can increase the flavor and palatability of a dessert.

Navigating restaurant or store bought desserts

But, what do you do If you want to enjoy a full blown real deal dessert? Or maybe you're at dinner and want dessert? Here are additional tips for enjoying traditional higher sugar and higher fat desserts on occasion.

Most traditional desserts are lacking in protein and fiber to help slow down their digestion, so we want to choose desserts that offer slightly more protein like cheesecake or ice cream and also pair them with outside protein and fiber sources. One of the easiest ways to do this is to enjoy desserts with or immediately following a meal rather than on their own.



A note on low & no calorie sweeteners

We typically refer to these sweeteners as sugar substitutes or artificial sweeteners, but the official term is “non-nutritive sweeteners”. Here’s some general facts about all non-nutritive sweeteners:

- Contain no (or very little) calories or nutrients (this is why they’re called “non-nutritive”)
- They can be derived from plants, and sometimes even sugar itself
- They are sweeter than sugar, so you don’t need to use as much
- Some artificial sweeteners are not digested, and pass through the GI tract almost unchanged

When the FDA approves a non-nutritive sweetener for use in the US, they designate an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) level. The ADI is the amount that a person (including pregnant and nursing women) can safely consume each day for a lifetime.

It would be incredibly difficult for a person to reach the ADI level for any non-nutritive sweetener. (This [article from Harvard](#) on artificial sweeteners lists the ADI for each of the non-nutritive sweeteners and is also a good resource if you’re looking to learn more.)

Non-nutritive sweeteners and low/no calorie sweeteners are just like the other things we’ve discussed in this toolkit. They are tools for managing blood sugars. You can choose to use them or not. It’s up to you.

Are they safe to use in moderation?
For most people, yes.

Do you have to use them?
No.



Coffee

Coffee by itself does not contain any carbohydrates, but it's possible to experience a rise in blood sugar levels after drinking it.

Coffee may raise blood sugar levels for some people, but not for others. And, it's likely not the coffee itself causing your blood sugar to rise. It's the caffeine and what you eat while drinking it.

How much coffee can raise your blood sugar level will depend on a variety of factors:

- What time of day you're drinking it
- What you're adding to your coffee
- Other foods you are (or aren't) eating with it
- Your body's unique attributes (e.g., age, health)
- How regularly you consume caffeinated beverages



2 tips for balanced blood sugars with coffee

1. Pair your coffee with a blood sugar friendly creamer.
2. Don't drink coffee on an empty stomach.

What to look for in coffee creamer options

- Low/no added sugar
- Added protein
- Added fiber

Many coffee creamers on the market contain added sugar. But, there are also options that utilize other sweeteners that don't add additional sugar to your coffee.



What to eat with your coffee

Drinking your coffee on an empty stomach can not only contribute to possible gastrointestinal distress, but it may also mean you're more likely to experience a rise in blood sugar.

Since blood sugar levels can run higher in the morning, eating a meal that will help initiate an insulin response may help your body tolerate the caffeine in your coffee better.

Alcohol

Many people are either told they should avoid alcohol all together, or are told it's fine with little to no guidance or support. Both scenarios leave the patient feeling confused on what's ok and what's not ok.

I am in no way saying someone with diabetes should consume alcohol. I just know some people will choose to regardless, and I want you to be equipped to do so as safely as possible... If you choose to.

If you choose to consume alcohol, it should always be consumed in moderation.

- Do not consume alcohol when your blood sugar is out of range (hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia). Alcohol impairs your ability to "feel" your blood sugar changing and could result in a dangerously high or low blood sugar.
- Eat before you drink! Eat carbohydrate and protein before consuming alcohol.
- Avoid cocktails made with syrups. Large amounts of added sugar combined with alcohol can do a number on your blood sugar.
- Don't drink by yourself. Be safe. Have a friend or loved one with you that knows you have diabetes.
- Do not take insulin for alcohol. Alcohol and hypoglycemia is common. Alcohol causes your blood sugar to go down, and no this is not a good thing!



Carbohydrate Counting



Nutrition Facts

Food Code	1464
Calories	160
Fat Calories	129
Total Fat	14 g
Saturated Fat	2 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Sodium	7 mg
Total Carbs	9 g
Dietary Fiber	6 g
Sugars	1 g
Protein	2 g

Weight	103 g
---------------	-------

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	0

% DV	ZERO	SAVE
------	------	------

CLEAR	CUSTOM	TOTAL
-------	--------	-------

Carbohydrate Counting 101

Whether you're managing pre-diabetes through lifestyle changes, or insulin-dependent diabetes, or something in between... some level of knowledge about carbohydrate counting is needed to properly manage blood sugars. Accurately measuring and knowing the general amount of carbs on your plate is crucial for blood sugar success.

Yes, some people (like those on insulin) will need to count carbohydrates in more detail than others, but it's important to understand the concept regardless of where you are in your diabetes journey. Because, even if you're not on medication, higher carbohydrate meals and foods need to be paired with higher amounts of fat, fiber, and protein to get the blood sugar benefits we discussed previously.

Getting started with carb counting:

If you're just learning to count carbohydrates, where do you start?

1. Make a list of the most common foods you eat and look up how many carbohydrates are in the amount you commonly eat. Write out your list and place it in an easy to reference place in your home.
2. Initially, you may want to measure your food to start to train yourself to recognize certain portions of food. Over time, you'll get better and better at "eyeballing" serving sizes.
3. Determine additional tools you'll need, if any. (See the next couple pages for Ideas.)



Carb counting tools

Find a good app to look up foods on your phone or tablet

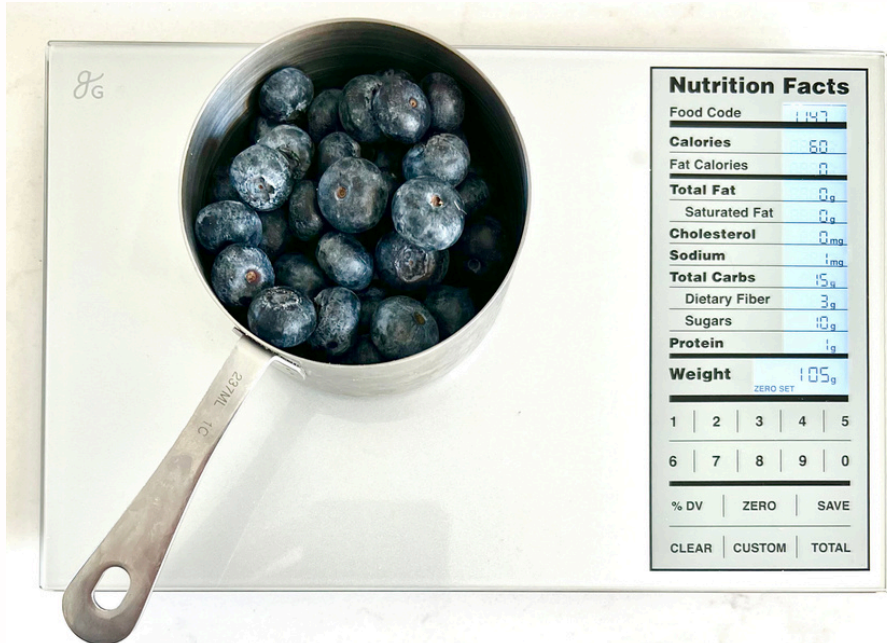
My two favorite apps for looking up carbohydrate counts on both branded and unbranded foods are My Fitness Pal and Calorie King. The paid version of Calorie King also allows you to input recipes if you don't have nutrition information for them and build your own nutrition labels.



When to use a food scale

A food scale isn't warranted in all situations but it can be especially useful for certain types of foods. Volume measurements aren't as accurate as weight measurements. So, you're much more likely to carb count correctly if you're weighing out a certain number of grams or ounces of a food than if you're measuring out a volume. This is especially true for fruit and other foods that do not come with food labels, as well as certain "higher stakes" foods. Higher stakes foods are those foods that have higher amounts of carbohydrate or sugar and a small discrepancy in measurement could mean a larger error in carb counting.

The scale below is the one we use in our house. It even produces a food label for common foods like fruits and veggies to make carb counting even easier. I've linked it [here](#). (Amazon Affiliate link)



What are net carbs?

Total carbohydrates represent the total number of all carbohydrates in a food. But, net carbohydrates refers to the portion of total carbohydrates in a food that can/will actually impact blood sugar levels. Not all carbohydrates impact blood sugar levels.

Net carbohydrates (vs total carbohydrates) are the carbohydrates that can impact blood sugars and that the body can absorb and digest. This terminology can be somewhat confusing for consumers though, as there's not a consistent definition. And, net carbs are not a regulated term on a nutrition label.

So, when you see net carbs listed on a label, remember that they're not always calculated the same. I'll show a few examples below on different ways to calculate them.

To calculate net carbs, most people will subtract the following from the Total carbohydrate number:

- If fiber is >5g, subtract half of the fiber grams
- Subtract half of the sugar alcohol grams
- Subtract all of the allulose grams

$$\text{Total carbohydrate} - (0.5 \times \text{Fiber}) - (0.5 \times \text{Sugar Alcohols}) - (\text{Allulose}) = \text{Net Carbs}$$

Please note that this is not an end all, be all formula. Some people notice a blood sugar response from fiber and choose not to subtract it from the Total carbohydrate number.

Alternatively, some people don't notice a response at all and subtract all of the fiber.

Also, some people may or may not subtract out sugar alcohols.

The formula above is typically where your diabetes education team will tell you to start and then make adjustments from there.

As always, speak with your healthcare team if you have any specific questions or concerns.

Let's practice...



1 cup blueberries

Nutrition Facts	
servings per container	
Serving size	(155g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	80
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0g	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 19g	7%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 13g	
Added Sugars 0g	0%
Protein <1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 10mg	0%
Iron 0.3mg	2%
Potassium 80mg	2%
Vitamin A 0mcg	0%
Vitamin C 4mg	4%
Manganese 0.23mg	10%
Vitamin K 25mcg	20%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

As you can see, the Total Carbohydrates listed is 19g, Fiber is 4g, and there are no sugar alcohols or allulose in blueberries.

So, our net carb vs total carb calculation could look like this...

$$19\text{g} - (0.5 \times 4\text{g}) - (0) - (0) = 17\text{g net carbs}^*$$

*Remember, your number may be different depending on how you and your doctor choose to handle fiber and sugar alcohols.

Grocery Shopping



Grocery shopping

A diabetes diagnosis brings a whole host of emotions and realities. And often times, one of the biggest questions people have is about what they can buy at the grocery store. Many people think it needs to be completely overhauled when in reality we may just need to tweak a few things. So, do you need a whole separate grocery list for diabetes? Most likely, no. But, there are some key things to look for and have on your list.

For your grocery list, we're going to focus on looking for foods that have fat, fiber, and protein... and foods you enjoy eating.

We're going to divide our list into all the standard sections of a normal grocery list:

1. Beverages
2. Bread/Bakery
3. Dairy
4. Grocery aisles
5. Frozen foods
6. Meat, poultry, eggs
7. Produce
8. Low blood sugar supplies

The one section that is out of the ordinary for a typical grocery list is low blood sugar supplies.

People with diabetes can eat all foods. The foods on the next few pages are not an exhaustive list. It is meant to be a starting point to guide you throughout the grocery store.



Beverages

Look for beverages with no added sugar, low sugar, and possibly added protein. Things to look for include:

- Unsweetened sparkling water
- No added sugar electrolyte drinks
- Unsweetened iced tea
- 100% fruit juices

Bread/bakery

Bread and bakery items are often really scary for people with diabetes because they feel like they shouldn't eat them... but you can confidently eat these foods. Look for:

- Whole grain sandwich bread
- Sourdough bread
- Grain free bread
- Flour tortillas
- Corn tortillas
- Higher fiber baked goods

Dairy

For dairy, we're looking at milks, yogurts, and cheese. With milk, we want options with no added sugar, or very little of it. For yogurt, choose unsweetened flavors or brands that offer lower amounts of added sugar. And cheese makes a great easy protein source.

- 2% milk and whole milk
- Unsweetened plant based milks
- Plain yogurt
- Plain Greek yogurt
- Low sugar flavored yogurts

Frozen foods

Look for the following when shopping the frozen foods section...

- Low sodium frozen dinners
- Low sugar frozen treats
- Frozen hamburgers
- Frozen chicken
- Frozen fish and other seafood
- Frozen fruit and veggies

Meat, poultry, and eggs

Focus on lean sources of protein like the below examples...

- Lean ground beef
- Salmon
- Shrimp
- Chicken breasts
- Ground Turkey
- Large eggs

Produce

Below I'll list some great produce options I prefer, but know that people with diabetes can enjoy all types of produce!

- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Onions
- Spinach
- Beets
- Celery
- Brussel sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Asparagus
- Artichokes
- Grapes
- Apples
- Prunes
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Tart cherries
- Pears
- Avocados

Low blood sugar supplies

Look for rapid acting sources of sugar when choosing your preferred low blood sugar supplies. Some of my favorites include:

- Glucose tablets
- Honey pouches
- Fruit snacks
- Apple sauce pouches

Treating Low Blood Sugars



Treating low blood sugars

What is a low blood sugar?

Most health care professionals define hypoglycemia as a blood glucose value less than 70mg/dL. But, you should definitely talk with your own healthcare team about when they want you to treat a low blood sugar. Your doctor may recommend a snack for low blood sugar at a different value depending on your lifestyle and other factors.

How to treat a low blood sugar

Have you heard of the rule of 15 for low blood sugar? It says that if your blood sugar is low, you should eat 15g rapid acting carbohydrate, and then wait 15 minutes. Re-test your blood sugar, and if it is not back to normal levels, consume additional carbohydrate.

Rapid acting carbohydrates are foods that people with diabetes should typically limit or eat in moderation. And, you'll notice these foods do not have fat or protein present. Fat and protein can slow down how long it takes for the carbohydrate to raise your blood sugar. Normally, this is what we want, but not when your blood sugar is low.

Good foods for low blood sugars



Stabilizing blood sugars after a low

Once you've treated your low blood sugar and it is back up in normal range, try eating a protein source to help prevent your blood sugar from dropping low again right after. My personal favorite is a spoonful of peanut butter or a slice of cheese.

Eating Out & Fast Food



Eating out & fast food

Eating out with diabetes can be overwhelming, but it is possible! I actually rely on fast food or quick restaurant meals often. I'm a working parent just like many other people and I'm thankful there are so many amazing blood sugar friendly options available.

This wasn't always the case though. "Fast food" has changed dramatically over the last 20 years with more and more healthy high protein, fast food options and restaurants. Some of my favorites include: Cava, Chipotle, Starbucks, and Jason's Deli.

Be aware of your portion sizes. While many restaurants offer large portion sizes that may be more than you're hungry for, others may be too small. Looking up the nutrition information ahead of time is a great way to know how you could adjust the amount you eat to meet your nutrition goals or targets.



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10 restaurant tips for diabetes

1. Look up the nutritional information for menu items ahead of time.
2. Don't go to a fast food restaurant when you are overly hungry. Wait for a time when you can be most in tune with your hunger and fullness cues. If you've skipped a meal that same day, you may not be able to listen to your body to the best of your ability.
3. Make sure you always include a protein source.
4. Look for menu items with veggies.
5. Choose dishes more likely to be higher in fiber.
6. Steer clear of dishes with high amounts of saturated fat. Keep in mind, most fried fast food items are fried twice by the time they make it to your hands. (The first time happens initially before most fast food is frozen at a production center, and again in the restaurant when "cooked.") This means the amount of fat can be much higher and may cause a delayed glucose spike.
7. Avoid high sugar beverages.
8. Eat slowly, and stop when you feel full.
9. Don't size up or super size an order.
10. Don't assume that salads are the best option. They may be lacking in protein or have more carbs than you think.



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Bedtime Snacks



Bedtime snacks

Whether you have diabetes or not, the idea of a bedtime snack is fairly common to everyone.

It can have a direct impact on your blood sugars the next morning. And we all know having a stable blood sugar come morning time is important for the rest of your day.

Foods that help keep blood sugars stable at night and make for the best bedtime snacks for diabetes are those with:

- Fiber (complex carbs)
- Low amounts of added sugar (or none)
- Protein
- Small amounts of fat

Most diabetes nutrition professionals recommend a moderate amount of complex carbohydrates before bedtime. A low carb snack may be appropriate if/when blood sugar levels are running higher than normal.

Bedtime snack ideas

1. Avocado toast
2. Low glycemic bar
3. Low sugar Greek yogurt
4. Peanut butter crackers
5. Handful of your favorite nuts
6. Popcorn and nuts
7. Fruit + fat/protein
8. Glass of 2% milk
9. 1/2 turkey sandwich
10. Small low sugar ice cream bar



Special Diets

Intermittent Fasting, Keto, and Vegan



Intermittent fasting

Intermittent fasting and time-restricted eating (TRE) have been studied in several forms over the years and some studies do show possible improvements in some diabetes markers like blood glucose and HgbA1c. But there are some gaps in the research and the question remains, is intermittent fasting and diabetes a safe and effective way to manage diabetes over long periods of time?

Research has shown that intermittent fasting may be beneficial. It may lower blood glucose levels (both fasting and after meals), blood insulin, and HgbA1c, but there are side effects and potential risks. And, although the research is promising for intermittent fasting and diabetes, additional research should be done in more populations and for longer periods of time.

If you choose to adopt a form of intermittent fasting to help manage diabetes, it is vitally important to speak with your doctor before starting. Not only do you need to consider what is safe for you, your mental health, and your diabetes management; but also what is practical for your lifestyle and needs. Your healthcare team should be involved in this decision.

It is pretty universally agreed that people with type 1 diabetes should not attempt intermittent fasting. Fasting increases the risk of both severe hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia in people with type 1 diabetes.

Intermittent fasting side effects and risks

1. Fatigue
2. Hunger
3. Emotional stress
4. Headache
5. Diarrhea
6. Hypoglycemia
7. Hyperglycemia
8. Dehydration

Research, though not conclusive, has shown promising positive physical benefits for people with type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes. Whether or not it is appropriate for you though depends on your lifestyle, emotional needs, and doctor's input.

Intermittent fasting may be safe for some people with type 2 diabetes and prediabetes, but not everyone. You must consider the emotional and lifestyle impact of such a drastic change in eating patterns. And, as always, speak with your doctor to get their thoughts and discuss what is safest and best for your situation.



Keto

The keto diet is a high-fat (60%), moderate-protein (30%), and low-carb (10%) diet. Most people on keto diets eat less than 50 grams of carbs per day.

Our bodies prefer using carbs for energy. When the body is starving, it'll switch to plan B: using fat stores for energy. The keto diet tricks your body into entering a starving state, without actually starving. It enters "ketosis" and starts to use fat for energy instead of carbs. Our bodies break down fat into ketones, which our brain uses instead of glucose for energy.

Since the keto diet focuses on the macronutrient ratio and not specific foods, it can look different depending on who you talk to.

Some people will follow a "dirty" keto diet, which includes high saturated fat foods like cheese, bacon, butter, and other highly processed foods. Unfortunately, it doesn't always include fresh fruits or vegetables.

When following the keto diet, it's still important to include foods from every food group to get the nutrients your body needs!

Since keto is a low-carb diet, it seems like it would be good for diabetes.

Unfortunately, the answer isn't that simple. Some studies have shown a keto diet has a positive effect on diabetes. This includes lower A1C and reduced insulin doses. However, there is still not enough research to know the long-term effects on the body.

Depending on your age, life stage, the type of diabetes, and other factors, keto may not be the best diet to manage your diabetes.

It's possible to follow the keto diet if you have diabetes, but it requires extra care and supervision. The long term effects are not fully understood, so make sure to talk with your diabetes care team about your eating pattern and symptoms you may feel. This is especially important if you are taking insulin, since the low-carb diet and insulin combined may cause blood sugars to drop.

And keep in mind, the potential benefits of keto will be the most helpful if it is followed long-term. The problem is, the keto diet isn't easy to stick to since it is so restrictive and may be hard to keep following. Most people are not able to follow a keto diet past one year because of how restrictive it is.

If you're considering a keto diet, here are some questions you can ask yourself to figure out if it's a good option for you:

1. Are high-carb foods a staple to my culture?
2. Will it be a challenge for me to count grams of carbs and fat in my diet?
3. Is this a good diet for my current activity level? (High intensity exercises may be difficult on the keto diet)
4. Will this diet be sustainable for me long term?
5. Will this improve my quality of life or make it worse?

Vegan/Plant-based eating

A whole-foods, plant-based eating pattern generally includes pulses, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts, and is high in fiber.

The two most common approaches found in the literature for plant based eating emphasize plant-based vegetarian eating including egg (ovo) and/or dairy (lacto) products, or vegan eating devoid of all animal-derived products.

Plant-based protein foods provide quality protein, healthy fats, and fiber. Plant-based eating patterns have been shown to be beneficial for a number of different health markers related to diabetes including HgbA1c, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.

Plant based eating can be appropriate for people with all types of diabetes.

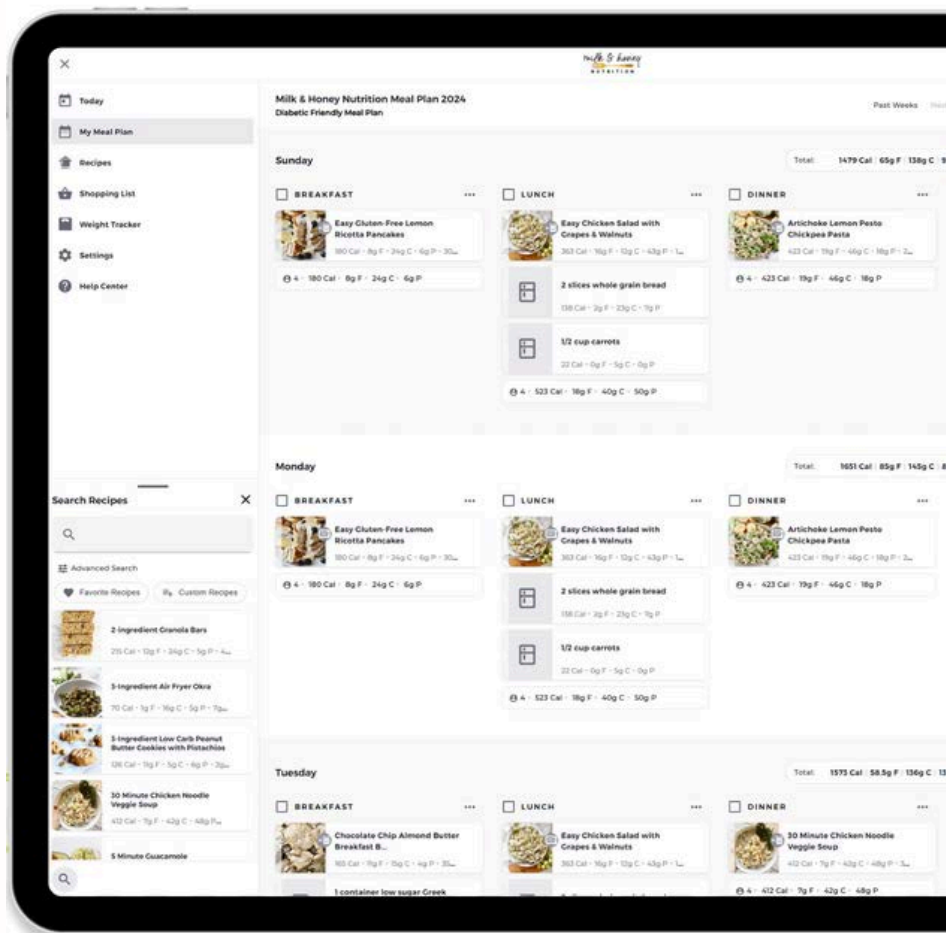
Many people assume that they need to go full vegan to benefit from eating a plant based diet. The reality is though, that even small increases in plant foods (and subsequent small decreases in animal foods) without eliminating animal foods all together can have health and diabetes management benefits.

This is largely because as you increase the amount of plants in your diet, one of our favorite nutrients also increases... FIBER!



7-day meal plan

with recipes and grocery list



Meal plan notes

Before we dive into your free 7-day meal plan that is included with this ebook, there are a few things I want to point out and encourage you to do when reading this meal plan, and any meal plan that wasn't designed specifically with your individual needs in mind.

The meal plan on the next pages is a great starting point, but it is meant to be a general guide that you can then work with your care team to cater to your individual needs.

This meal plan and grocery list are written for 2 people. Make adjustments to groceries and servings as needed.

Any substitutions in the recipes may change the nutrition information for that recipe. We do make use of leftovers in this meal plan!

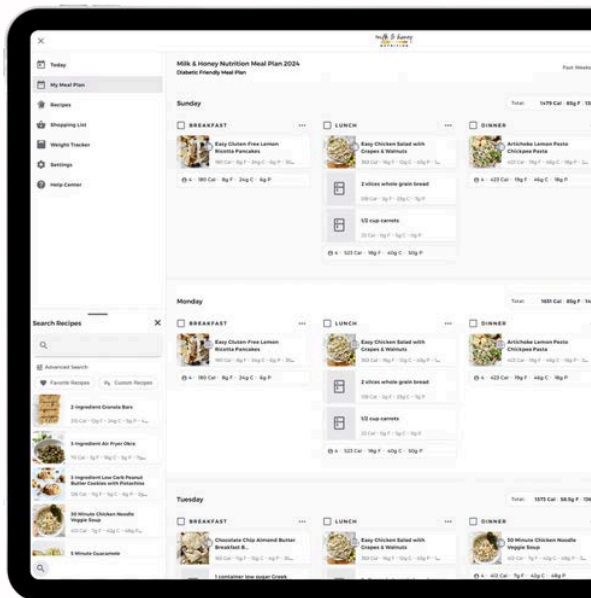
I'm not a big lunch recipe person, so all of the lunches in this meal plan are meant to be quick and easy to prep.

For beverages, choose water, and other sugar free or low sugar fluids



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Monday

Breakfast: Spinach and Artichoke Quiche

Lunch: Turkey sandwich on whole grain bread w/ veggies and mustard; fruit, low carb crackers

Dinner: One Pan Sun-dried Tomato & Olive Chicken

Snacks: Fruit of choice, protein bar, and handful of nuts

Tuesday

Breakfast: Spinach and Artichoke Quiche

Lunch: Treat yourself, eat out!

Dinner: One Pan Sun-dried Tomato & Olive Chicken

Snacks: Hummus with dipping veggies, 1-2oz cheese, popcorn

Wednesday

Breakfast: Spinach and Artichoke Quiche

Lunch: Snack lunch plate

Dinner: Cilantro Lime Shrimp with Coconut Rice

Snacks: Fruit of choice, protein bar, and handful of nuts

Sunday

Breakfast: Strawberry Banana Sheetpan Pancakes + Low sugar Greek yogurt

Lunch: Cheese quesadillas with side salad

Dinner: Low Carb Orange Chicken & Broccoli

Snacks: Fruit of choice, protein bar, and handful of nuts

Thursday

Breakfast: Raspberry Oatmeal Muffins + 2 cooked eggs

Lunch: Turkey sandwich on whole grain bread w/ veggies and mustard; fruit, low carb crackers

Dinner: Cilantro Lime Shrimp w/ Coconut Rice

Snacks: Hummus with dipping veggies, 1-2oz cheese, popcorn

Friday

Breakfast: Raspberry Oatmeal Muffins + 2 cooked eggs

Lunch: Treat yourself, eat out!

Dinner: Low Carb Orange Chicken & Broccoli

Snacks: Fruit of choice, protein bar, and handful of nuts

Saturday

Breakfast: Strawberry Banana Sheetpan Pancakes + Low sugar Greek yogurt

Lunch: Snack lunch plate

Dinner: Treat yourself, eat out!

Snacks: Hummus with dipping veggies, 1-2oz cheese, popcorn

This meal plan is written for 2 adults. Each recipe has full nutrition information for your reference as well. Please make adjustments as needed based on feedback from your diabetes care team.

Grocery List

Bread/Bakery

- Whole grain sandwich bread
- 1 dozen flour or corn tortillas

Dairy

- 2 low sugar Greek yogurt cups
- 6 Tbsp butter
- 2 1/2 cups 4% cottage cheese
- Parmesan cheese
- Hummus
- Shredded cheese for quesadillas
- Cheese sticks, cubes, or slices for snacks

Meat, Eggs, Poultry

- 2 dozen eggs
- 2.5 lbs boneless chicken thighs
- 1 lb peeled shrimp
- 1 lb nitrate free turkey deli meat

Frozen foods

- 8oz frozen spinach
- 1 bag frozen cauliflower rice

Grocery aisles

- Almond flour
- Tapioca flour
- Coconut flour
- Almond butter
- 1 cup nuts for snacks
- 6 Protein bars for snacks
- Popcorn for snacks
- Low carb crackers for lunches
- Sesame oil
- 2 cartons low sodium chicken broth

Canned goods

- Artichoke hearts
- Full fat coconut milk
- Kalamata olives
- Sun-dried tomatoes
- No salt added crushed tomatoes
- Anchovies
- Cannellini beans

Produce

- 2 medium onions
- 7 Garlic cloves
- 2 scallions
- 2 heads of broccoli
- 2 cups raspberries
- 1 cup strawberries
- 1 banana
- 1 orange
- 1 lime
- Fruit for snacks and lunches
- Dipping veggies (carrot sticks celery sticks, etc) for snacks and lunches
- Fresh cilantro
- Fresh basil
- Bagged salad mix (for Sunday lunch)

Things you may already have

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| • Italian seasoning | • Cinnamon | • Ground ginger |
| • Vanilla extract | • Baking powder | • Chili powder |
| • Almond extract | • Low sodium soy sauce | • Olive oil |
| • Maple syrup | | • Mustard |
| • Rolled oats | • Rice vinegar | • White rice |

Spinach and Artichoke Quiche

Eggs and cottage cheese combine here with your favorite dip for a high protein breakfast. Almond flour replaces traditional pie crust for a dose of healthy fats and added fiber. It feels fancy enough for a holiday but simple enough to make ahead for breakfast during the week.

Ingredients

- 2 cups Almond Flour
- ¼ cup tapioca flour
- 6 Tbsp butter, cold
- 2 Tbsp egg whites (about 1 large egg white)
- 2 Tbsp Italian seasoning, divided
- ½ onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 cup (160g) artichoke hearts, quartered, drained from water
- 8 oz frozen spinach (can sub 2-3 cups fresh spinach)
- 1/2 cup 4% cottage cheese
- 6 large eggs
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese

Nutrition Info

Calories 470
Total Fat 37g
Sat Fat 11g
Sodium 322mg
Total carbs 18g
Fiber 7g
Total Sugar 5g
Added sugar 0g
Protein 21g

Tips/notes

Yield: 6 servings
Time: 50 minutes
Keeps well in the fridge for 3-4 days or in the freezer for several months.

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350F. While the oven is preheating, start prepping your crust. In a large mixing bowl, add the almond and tapioca flours. Then, add 6 tbsp of butter cut into pieces. With your hands, combine the flour and butter until well combined. The heat of your hands will melt the butter into the crust. Once a dough forms, add the egg whites and 1 Tbsp of the Italian seasoning. Stir until well combined and then press into a greased 9 inch pie pan. Add to the oven for 10-15 minutes. Meanwhile, add onion and garlic to a large saute pan on medium heat. Cook for 3-5 minutes, or until onions are translucent. Add artichokes, spinach, and remaining Italian seasoning. Cook for an additional 5-7 minutes or until veggies are softened. Remove from heat and add to a mixing bowl. Stir in cottage cheese and eggs and add to pie crust. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese and return to the oven to cook for an additional 30 minutes or until eggs are fully set. Let cool at least 10 minutes before cutting and enjoy!

Raspberry Oatmeal Muffins

These muffins are the perfect make ahead breakfast. They have the power trio of protein, fiber, and fat to help keep you full all morning. Raspberries are one of the highest fiber fruits, but feel free to substitute your favorite fruit instead to mix it up.

Ingredients

- 1 cup 4% cottage cheese
- 2 cups raspberries
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp almond butter
- ½ cup rolled oats
- ⅓ cup coconut flour
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tsp baking powder

Nutrition Info

Calories 295
Total Fat 12g
Sat Fat 3g
Sodium 490 mg
Total carbs 30g
Fiber 9g
Total Sugar 12g
Added sugar 6g
Protein 18g

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350F. Add all ingredients except for the eggs and baking powder to a blender. Blend on high until well combined. Then, add the eggs and baking powder on low until just incorporated. Pour into greased muffin tins and bake for 25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Tips/notes

Yield: 4 servings (1 serving = 3 muffins)

Time: 35 minutes

Keeps well for several days in the fridge or several months in the freezer.

The recipe also works very well with blueberries!

Strawberry Banana Sheet Pan Pancakes

Sheet pan pancakes are your solution to quick and easy pancakes for the whole family. You can make an entire batch of pancakes without slaving over the stove and allowing the first pancakes to get cold while the others cook. These pancakes have an added boost of protein from the cottage cheese and natural sweetness from my favorite fruit combo: strawberry and banana.

Ingredients

- 1 cup 4% cottage cheese
- 1 cup strawberries, whole, green tops removed
- 1 banana
- ½ cup almond flour
- ⅓ cup coconut flour
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 4 eggs
- 1 tsp baking powder

Nutrition Info

Calories 291
Total Fat 15g
Sat Fat 5g
Sodium 366 mg
Total carbs 20g
Fiber 6g
Total Sugar 8g
Added sugar 0g
Protein 18g

Directions

These pancakes couldn't be simpler! To start, preheat the oven to 400F. In the meantime, make the batter in the blender. Add cottage cheese, strawberries, banana, both flours, vanilla, and cinnamon to your blender. Blend on high until well combined. Then, add eggs and baking powder. Blend on low until just incorporated, being mindful not to over mix. Finally, add the batter to a greased or parchment paper lined half sheet pan (approx 9x13in). Bake for 10-12 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Tips/notes

Yield: 4 servings

Time: 15 minutes

Keeps well for several days in the fridge or several months in the freezer. If freezing, cut into individual pancakes prior to freezing.

Can also sub whole milk Greek yogurt instead of cottage cheese.

One Pan Sun-dried Tomato & Olive Chicken

This one pan dish incorporates pantry staples that you may already have on hand for an easy weeknight meal. It's slightly sweet, slightly tangy and very filling due to its high fiber and protein content.

Ingredients

- 1.5lbs boneless chicken thighs
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp Italian spice blend, divided
- 2 Tbsp kalamata olive brine*
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup kalamata olive, chopped
- ½ cup sundried tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes, canned, no salt added
- 2 anchovies, optional (see notes)
- 1 15 oz can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped, optional topping
- *juice from the olive jar

Nutrition Info

Calories 419
Total Fat 12g
Sat Fat 3g
Sodium 327mg
Total carbs 36g
Fiber 9g
Total Sugar 13g
Added sugar 0g
Protein 41g

Tips/notes

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 30 minutes
Can omit anchovies and add additional olives or capers or salt to taste.

Directions

Marinate chicken in olive oil, 1 Tbsp Italian spices, and olive brine. Let sit for 30 minutes or up to 24 hours in the fridge. In a large skillet over medium heat, add drizzle of olive oil, onion and garlic. Cook for 5–7 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add chicken thighs and sear each side for 2–3 minutes. Then add olives, sun dried tomatoes, and crushed tomatoes. Stir to combine. If using anchovies, cut lengthwise to remove spine bone and then add to the sauce. Mash into the sauce until fully incorporated. Let simmer for 15–20 minutes or until the chicken is fully cooked (opaque and/or reads 165F on a meat thermometer. If using bone-in chicken thighs add about 10 minutes to the cooking time. In the last few minutes of cooking add in 1 can of rinsed cannellini beans. Top with fresh basil before serving.

Cilantro Lime Shrimp with Coconut Rice

Shrimp is one of my favorite dinner proteins because it cooks up so fast and soaks up this delicious yet simple marinade like a sponge! The rice is also incredibly creamy and packed with flavor. You'd never know that 2 cups of veggies are hidden inside it.

Ingredients

- 1lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Juice from 1 lime
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp chili powder, optional
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- ½ cup white rice, dry
- 2 cups cauliflower rice, frozen is ok but thaw and drain first
- ¾ cup canned full fat coconut milk
- ¾ cup low sodium chicken or veggie broth

Nutrition Info

Calories 309
Total Fat 12g
Sat Fat 8g
Sodium 333mg
Total carbs 22g
Fiber 1g
Total Sugar 2g
Added sugar 0g
Protein 26g

Tips/notes

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 30 minutes

Keeps well in the fridge up to 3 days.

Directions

Add shrimp to a large bowl with the lime juice, garlic, olive oil and chili powder if using. Let it sit to marinate for at least 15 minutes at room temperature or up to 24 hours in the fridge. Meanwhile, start cooking the rice. Add rice, cauliflower rice, coconut milk and veggie broth to a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 15-20 minutes or until the liquid is fully absorbed and the rice is fluffy. Brown rice might need 10-15 minutes longer. Now back to the shrimp. Heat a skillet over medium heat. Add the shrimp and the marinade to the pan. Cook for 5-7 minutes per side or until shrimp is fully opaque. Sprinkle in the fresh cilantro in the last minute of cooking. Stir to combine and serve over rice.

Low Carb Orange Chicken & Broccoli

This dish is faster than takeout and way more nutrient dense. The secret here is the orange zest, which adds tons of flavor and sweetness without the need for excess salt and sugar. The second key is a touch of tapioca flour to thicken the sauce for that classic takeout feel.

Ingredients

- 1lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 ½ Tbsp sesame oil, divided
- ¼ cup low sodium chicken broth
- 1 navel orange, juiced and zested
- 2 Tbsp coconut aminos or low sodium soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 scallions
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 Tbsp tapioca flour
- 6 cups broccoli, chopped into florets

Nutrition Info

Calories 269
Total Fat 10g
Sat Fat 2g
Sodium 290 mg
Total carbs 19g
Fiber 4g
Total Sugar 5g
Added sugar 0g
Protein 26g

Tips/notes

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 45 minutes

Keeps well in the fridge up to 3 days.

Directions

Cut chicken into bite sized pieces and place into a large mixing bowl. Add ½ Tbsp sesame oil, chicken broth, orange juice and zest, coconut aminos, rice vinegar, ginger, garlic, scallions, and 2 Tbsp of the flour to the bowl and stir well to combine. Let sit for at least 15 minutes or up to 24 hours in the fridge. Heat a large wok or skillet over medium heat. Add 1 Tbsp sesame oil and all of the marinated chicken (don't forget to use all the marinade, too!) Cook for 5-7 minutes and then add broccoli and remaining tapioca flour. Stir well. Cook for another 5-10 minutes or until chicken is fully cooked (opaque center or reads 165F with a meat thermometer) and the broccoli is soft. The sauce should be thick, if it's too thin, add ½-1 Tbsp of additional tapioca flour.

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