

# Think Your Plate

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**M**aking the right food choices is a great way for people with diabetes to control their blood glucose. Managing blood glucose helps reduce the risk for health complications.

## What does healthful eating mean if I have diabetes?

- Eating the right amount of whole grain foods, vegetables, fruits, low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, lean cuts of meat, fish or poultry and beans each day.
- Paying attention to portion size (the amount of food you eat in one sitting).
- Eating three small meals and two healthy snacks each day.
- Planning meals ahead of time.
- Having healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables available in your home.

## Why is eating healthfully important if I have diabetes?

- Helps you manage blood glucose
- Reduces your risk for heart disease, stroke, eye disease and other complications
- Helps you better manage moods and feelings
- Gives you energy throughout the day

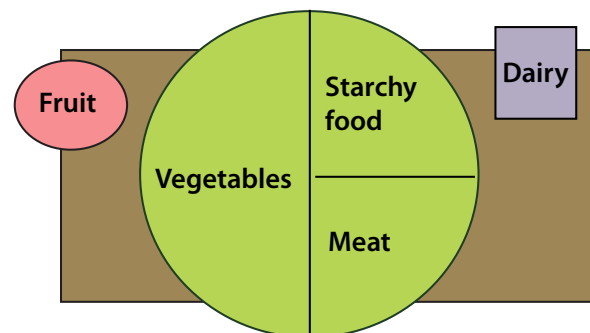
## What are the benefits of using the plate method?

The plate method helps you:

- Make healthy food choices
- Eat more dietary fiber, which helps control your blood sugar
- Manage your weight
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Control the amount of carbohydrate foods you eat

## How can I “think my plate”?

1. Use a dinner plate that is nine inches in diameter. (Using a plate larger than that may encourage you to eat larger portions of food.)
2. Imagine that your plate is divided into three sections as shown in the diagrams below.
3. Fill your plate according to the following proportions:
  - Use the large section, or half of the plate, for non-starchy vegetables (green salad, cooked or raw broccoli, carrots, green beans, or cauliflower). Eat both raw and cooked vegetables at each meal, and vary your veggies.
  - Use one of the smaller sections, or one quarter of your plate, for starchy food such as pasta, rice, cooked beans, or a starchy vegetable (potatoes, corn, beans, butternut squash and peas).
  - Use the other quarter of your plate for protein (chicken, turkey, fish, beef, pork, eggs, cheese, or tofu). Bake, grill, steam, or broil lean cuts of meat. Eat about 3 to 4 ounces of protein twice a day.
4. Add an 8-ounce glass of fat-free or low-fat milk.
5. Add a serving of fruit. Choose 1 small fresh fruit, 1 cup of melon (cantaloupe or honey dew), or half a cup canned fruit (in its own juice).



**Lunch or Dinner Plate**

## What do I do if I am eating mixed dishes?

When using mixed dishes such as meat-based casseroles or lasagna, one cup counts as a serving. Your serving of the mixed dish takes up the meat and starchy food section on the plate—that is, half of your plate. Fill the other half of your plate with non-starchy vegetables.

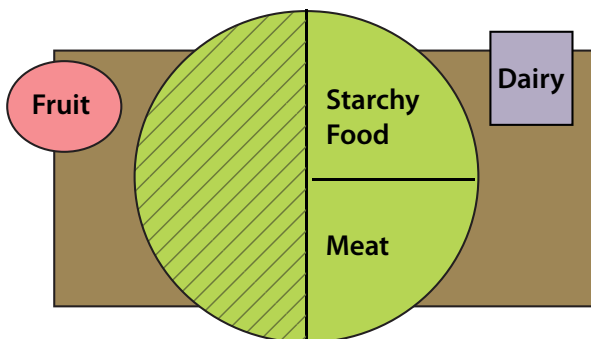
## Where do sweets and dessert fit?

Serving sizes of sweets and desserts are small. For example, a half a cup of ice cream or two small cookies equals one serving. When you have dessert with a meal it should replace similar servings of starchy food, fruit, or milk.

Sweets and rich desserts often contain carbohydrates and fat with few other nutrients. Many of these foods will raise blood glucose quickly. They also contribute to weight gain because they tend to be high in calories. These foods should be used only as a treat or for special occasions. Remember, fruits in the correct portion size can be used for dessert as they add a sweet taste without adding many calories, and they also are a source of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

## What do I do for breakfast?

- Use one quarter of your plate for protein such as one hard-boiled or scrambled egg.
- Use one quarter of your plate for cereal or bread.
- Add fruit and milk.



**Breakfast Plate**

## USDA's MyPlate food groups

### Grains

**Servings:** 6 or more a day

**Nutrients:** Good source of dietary fiber, vitamins (thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, folate) and minerals (iron, magnesium and selenium)

### What equals one serving of grains?

- 1 slice of bread
- ¾-inch corn bread (1 ½ oz)
- ¼ bagel (1 oz)
- ½ English muffin or pita bread
- ¾ cup unsweetened ready-to-eat cereal
- 3 cups popcorn
- 4-6 crackers
- 1 corn tortilla (6-inch size)
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- ½ cup potato, yam, peas, corn, or cooked beans
- 1 cup winter squash (butternut, acorn)
- ⅓ cup of cooked rice or pasta

### Best choices

#### Whole grains

- whole wheat bread, bagel, English muffin or pita bread
- brown rice
- whole wheat pasta
- popcorn (no butter)

#### Starchy vegetables (no added fat, sugar, or salt)

- butternut squash
- pumpkin
- potato
- peas or corn
- dried peas and beans
- lentils
- red, pinto, garbanzo or black beans, vegetarian baked beans

### Making wise choices

- Choose whole grain bread or cereal, brown rice, bulgur and couscous.
- Include beans in your diet every day. They are a good source of fiber and other nutrients.

- Choose whole wheat or other whole grain flours in cooking and baking.
- Have popcorn without butter as a snack.

### Vegetables

**Servings:** 3 to 5 a day

**Nutrients:** Good source of dietary fiber, folate, vitamins A, E and C

#### What equals one serving of vegetables?

- ½ cup cooked carrots
- 1 cup tossed green salad
- ½ cup steamed broccoli
- ½ cup collard or other greens (no added fat)
- ½ cup summer (yellow or zucchini) squash
- 1 cup spinach salad
- 1 cup cucumber
- ½ cup steamed spinach
- ½ cup zucchini
- ½ cup vegetable juice (low-sodium is best)
- 1 cup cut-up raw non-starchy vegetables (carrots, cabbage, bell peppers, zucchini, cucumber, celery, snap beans, etc.)

#### Best choices

- fresh
- frozen, without sauce
- no salt, sugar or fat added

### Making wise choices

- Choose more vegetables that are dark green, yellow, or orange in color.
- Limit the use of sauces and seasonings on vegetables.
- Buy vegetables that are fresh and in season as they are cheaper and have good flavor.
- Choose frozen vegetables (no sauce) for quick and easy cooking.
- When buying canned vegetables, choose those that are low in salt.
- Include vegetables at lunch, dinner, and as snacks.

### Fruit

**Servings:** 2 to 4 a day

**Nutrients:** Good source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, folate, and potassium

#### What equals one serving of fruit?

- 1 small unpeeled apple
- 1 small orange
- 1 extra small banana
- 1 cup melon (cantaloupe, honey dew)
- 1¼ cup watermelon
- 1 cup raspberries
- ½ cup canned, unsweetened fruit
- 2 tbsp raisins
- ½ cup orange, grapefruit or prune juice
- 1¼ cups of whole strawberries
- ¾ cup blueberries
- 1 cup fresh blackberries

#### Best choices

- fresh
- frozen, with no added sugar

### Making wise choices

- Choose fresh fruit instead of fruit juice. Fresh fruits are a good source of dietary fiber and have no added sugar.
- Choose unsweetened fruit juice.
- Buy fruits canned in water or 100 percent fruit juice rather than in syrup.
- Vary fruit choices to get a variety of nutrients.

## Dairy

**Servings:** 2 to 3 a day

**Nutrients:** Good source of protein, calcium, phosphorus, vitamin D

### What equals one serving of dairy?

- 1 cup fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- 1 cup of yogurt
- 1 cup soy milk

### Best choices

- Fat free or low-fat (1%)milk
- Non-fat yogurt, without added sugar
- Unflavored soy milk

### Making wise choices

- Use fat-free or low-fat milk and yogurt.
- Use fat-free or low-fat milk when making:
  - cooked cereals
  - cream soups
  - desserts
- Use fat-free or low-fat yogurt:
  - As dips for fruits
  - To top a baked potato
  - With cut-up fruits for dessert
  - As a healthy snack

## Protein

**Servings:** 4 to 6 ounces a day

**Nutrients:** Good source of protein, B vitamins (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6), vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium

### What equals one serving of protein?

- 1 oz of chicken, turkey, fish, pork, beef
- ¼ cup cottage cheese
- 1 ounce of hard cheese
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp peanut butter
- ½ cup tofu

### Best choices

- Lean cuts of meat or pork with fat removed
- Chicken or turkey with skin removed before cooking
- Salmon, tuna, herring

### Making wise choices

- Choose lean cuts of meat.
- Remove skin and fat from poultry and meat.
- Bake, grill or roast meat, poultry, and fish instead of frying.
- Limit the use of sauces and breading because they add fat and calories.
- Choose fish such as salmon, trout, and herring.
- Limit cheese, hotdogs, processed sandwich meats, bacon, and sausage.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat cheese.
- Drain excess fat that appears during cooking.

## Ways to stay healthy with diabetes

- Do not skip breakfast.
- Eat slowly and enjoy the taste of your food.
- Have a glass of water before you begin to eat and drink more water throughout the day.
- Eat your non-starchy vegetables and salad first.
- Put away leftovers as soon as you finish eating.
- Identify situations that cause you to overeat and find ways to solve the problem.
- Do not use food as a source of comfort when you are stressed. Take a walk or talk with a friend.
- Enjoy the foods you love. Do not deprive yourself of all sweet or rich foods. Just have these foods in very small portions and only once in a while.
- If you are hungry before a meal, snack on some veggies.
- Keep a journal of the things you eat each day.
- Eat at about the same time each day.

## Resources

American Diabetes Association. Food and fitness. Accessed May 21, 2010 from [http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/my-food-advisor/?utm\\_source=Homepage&utm\\_medium=Carousel1&utm\\_campaign=MFA](http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/my-food-advisor/?utm_source=Homepage&utm_medium=Carousel1&utm_campaign=MFA).

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