

Healthy Eating for Diabetics: Questions & Answers

- **How about milk? Can I drink a lot of milk?**

No, limiting milk is best. Some people replace sugary drinks with milk. This can keep your blood sugar levels high. If you drink, choose non-fat or 1% milk.

- **Can I ever eat sweets again?**

Yes, you can eat sweets. One teaspoon of sugar can be worked into your daily meal plan. When you have diabetes, you can still enjoy your favorite foods. You just may need to eat less.

- **My grandmother was on a "diabetic" diet and it was horrible! Do I have to eat like that?**

Times have changed! Our understanding of how to live well with diabetes has also changed. There is no specific diet that will be good for every person with diabetes. Making small changes helps people feel better and get blood sugar levels in control.

- **I've heard fiber is good for people with diabetes. Is that true?**

Yes! Eating food with lots of fiber is good because it helps slow the release of sugar into the blood. That's why eating a whole orange, which has fiber, is better than drinking a glass of orange juice.

- **I'm hearing a lot about high-protein diets. Are they good for a person with diabetes?**

No, diets that call for eating a large amount of protein (meats, fish, cheese, nuts) can be hard on the kidneys. People with diabetes are prone to kidney disease, so eating large amounts of protein could lead to kidney damage. Check with your doctor before trying a high-protein diet. The long-term effects of such a diet on diabetes are not well known. Your medication may need to be adjusted if you make major food changes. Be sure to tell your doctor about changes in food or activity so that he/she can help you manage your diabetes well.

- **What about diabetes medicines and food? When should I eat if I'm taking medication?**

You need to eat at least three meals a day. Some people may need a snack in-between meals. It is best not to skip meals when taking medicine to lower your blood sugar. Most diabetes medicine requires that you eat before or after taking the medicine. It is very important to follow your doctor's instruction and take your medicine as directed. If you have questions, call your doctor.

- **Will drinking alcohol affect my diabetes? What if I am taking diabetes medicine?**

Yes, drinking alcohol will have different effects, depending on your weight, activity level and whether or not you are taking medication. If you drink alcohol, let your doctor know. Your doctor can talk with you more about diabetes and alcohol.

- **What about physical activity? Will that affect my blood sugar level?**

For most people, being more active will cause their blood sugar to go down. Walking is a great way to be active. It is best that you walk for 30 minutes most days of the week. You can break this down into three 10-minute walks if this works better for you. If you have been inactive for a while get your doctor's advice before you start.

- **I need someone to tell me what to eat. Can you give me some advice?**

People with diabetes can eat the foods they enjoy. Start by making small changes. Most people can start to get their blood sugar in the target range by eating less sugary foods or drinks. Water, vegetable juices, or sugar-free pop are better choices. Your nutritionist can help you with other food changes.

