

## MANAGING DIABETES THROUGH NUTRITION

Diabetes is a fact of life for millions. According to figures from the American Diabetes Association, more than 17 million Americans are living with diabetes, and 16 million of them have type 2 (formerly known as adult onset diabetes).

Diabetes can cause health problems throughout the body, but those who have type 2 can do a lot about improving their own health by keeping a careful watch on their nutrition. People with diabetes can live long, healthy lives if they take good care of themselves — particularly by controlling blood glucose levels through good nutrition.

The first step in making good food choices is understanding the U.S. Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines, which were developed by nutrition experts. The goal of establishing these guidelines is to help people understand how their eating habits can affect their health. These simple “ABC” guidelines can help everyone improve their health, whether or not they have diabetes:

- Aim** for fitness by reaching a healthy weight and being physically active each day.
- Build** a healthy base by following the food guide pyramid food choices. Each day eat a variety of grains (especially whole grains) and a variety of fruits and vegetables, and keep foods safe.
- Choose** a sensible diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat. Limit intake of sugars and salts, and drink alcohol in moderation, if at all.

Within these basic guidelines, the keys to controlling diabetes are: making wise food choices, exercising and taking prescribed medication as recommended by a health professional.

People with diabetes also must monitor their blood glucose levels regularly and make adjustments when needed. Blood glucose levels can be controlled by: reducing intake of starches and sugars, controlling portion sizes, increasing exercise and monitoring blood glucose levels. Monitoring blood glucose levels can help people with diabetes reduce their complications affecting eyes, nerves and kidneys.

Planning meals may look like an impossible task, but it's really not that difficult. Information from the American Diabetes Association and the American Diabetic Association is available by calling (800) 342-2382 or (800) 366-1655, or by visiting the Web at <http://www.diabetes.org/> or <http://www.eatright.org/>.

People with diabetes don't have to follow complicated meal plans or eat special foods. All they need to do is eat healthfully, the same foods as everyone else in the family. The key is making better food choices. First, add up the amount of fiber you eat every day — fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. Then, carefully monitor your intake of sugar, fat and salt — eat less each day. And be sure to choose foods from a wide selection each day.

These mealtime choices are good for everyone, whether they have diabetes or not. Healthy eating is a goal for everyone in the family. Here are some tips to help make meal management

easier:

–Eat meals and snacks at about the same times every day. People with diabetes especially need to do this, in order to help their bodies utilize carbohydrates.

–Eat about the same amount of food every day. Follow the meal plan and portion sizes ordered by your health professionals.

–For more interesting and appetizing meals, experiment with new foods and be willing to try new ones.

–Don't skip meals. That can lead to overeating at the next one.

–Use portion control; keep serving sizes monitored; and, plan for eating out.

If you adopt good eating habits and eat nutritionally balanced diabetes meals, you will be making a great start. Add to that all the other healthy habits — such as exercising regularly – and you will be on the road to staying healthy, whether you have diabetes or not.

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