

CHOOSING CARBOHYDRATES WISELY

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When you have diabetes and are trying to make healthy food choices, it's important to choose carbohydrates wisely.

Carbohydrates are found in a wide variety of foods – breads, cereals, pastas and whole grains; fruits, vegetables and beans; and dairy products. Carbohydrate is also found in table sugar, syrup, and most processed foods, like: crackers, pretzels, chips, candy and desserts.

Most of the carbohydrate you eat is turned into glucose and used by your body for energy.

Carbohydrate raises your blood glucose more than any other type of food. That's why if you eat too much carbohydrate, your blood glucose may rise to unhealthy levels.

Foods high in refined sugar or processed with white flour, like: cakes, cookies, pies, candies and desserts, are usually high in carbohydrate. These should be enjoyed only in small amounts because they usually offer little or no nutritional value, and can raise your blood glucose quickly.

But since your body needs carbohydrates for energy, cutting them out altogether is not an option. Instead, make your carbohydrate choices healthy.

Fruits and vegetables are two good choices. Most people today need to eat more of both. In fact, it's recommended that you get at least one cup of fruit and two-and-a-half cups of vegetables each day. These give you some of the nutrients your body needs for energy and overall health.

"I eat all the dark leafy green vegetables, spinach, kale, collard, mustard ... and I also like broccoli. Broccoli's easy to cook and it's very nutritious as well."

To get the fruits and vegetables you need each day, try cutting up vegetables ahead of time, and snacking on them throughout the day. Try a side salad with a meal, or choose canned fruit as an affordable way to take it and go. Just be careful of juices and fruit packed in syrup. They may be adding more sugar than you need. When in doubt, fresh fruit is always the better choice.

Another great way to get your daily carbohydrates is through whole grains and legumes. These carbohydrate choices can be high in fiber, which tend to fill you up, and help you feel full longer while not raising your blood glucose as fast as other carbohydrates. This is a benefit when trying to manage your diabetes.

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It is recommended that you get 25 to 35 grams of fiber each day. Choose fresh, high fiber carbohydrates like whole wheat pasta or brown rice. Look for cereal made from whole grains. Many companies today are beginning to offer whole grain options that will make your decisions in the grocery store a little easier.

Work with your healthcare provider to find more healthy carbohydrate choices that fit into your lifestyle.