

Carbohydrates

Eat primarily 'complex' carbohydrates. These are generally grains in their more natural form - with the fiber and nutrients still attached. The rationale is that the extra fiber or roughage slows digestion, and is easier for your body to assimilate. They also have more nutrients - sometimes the very ones needed for digestion!

Fiber goals based on age:

Fiber:	Men	Women
Under 50	38 gm	25 gm
Over 50	30 gm	21 gm

Complex Carbohydrates – have 1-2 servings per meal or snack, 5-10 servings per day You need 120 gm of carbohydrate daily = 8 'servings' of grains, fruit or milk

	Look for:
Whole grain breads, bagels, rolls	3+ gm fiber; first ingredient should be whole wheat flour or other whole grain. Unbleached wheat flour and wheat flour are not whole grain – they are regular white flour.
Cereal	4-5 + gm fiber; should be low in added sugars (8 gm or less)
Oatmeal or multigrain cooked cereal	Avoid instant, which is more refined and usually has sugar added.
Brown or Wild Rice, Barley, Wheat berries, Oat berries, whole wheat cous cous	Brown rice has ~ 2gm fiber, barley and the wheat and oat berries have double to triple that amount. Try cooking them together, ½ rice and ½ other grains.
Whole grain Pasta	5 -6 gm fiber – the quality has really improved, these are good now!
Whole Wheat Crackers	Look for 3+ gm fiber, low fat, no trans fat. Watch portion size – pull out a serving and put the box away!
Popcorn	Microwave versions can be very high fat and have trans fat. The ideal is to make your own – there is a container you can buy to make it yourself in the microwave. Or get the lowest fat version you can. Be aware of salt content.
Corn Tortillas	Corn tortillas have more fiber than wheat tortillas. Watch for type of fat
Beans and Legumes	Great source of fiber. Canned products can be high in salt. Refried beans in restaurants can have fat added.
Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes	Most low carb diet plans tell you to avoid potatoes. They are still good food – especially if you eat the skin and eat them without much added fats. My suggestion is to have them 1-2 times a week and watch portion size. A medium baked potato is about the right amount. Try substituting sweet potatoes half the time. They taste sweeter but have the same calorie levels and are loaded with good nutrients.

Sugars and refined carbohydrates – have only occasionally

Different names for Sugars

Sugar, brown sugar
Corn sweetener
Corn syrup
High –fructose corn syrup
Dextrose
Fructose
Fruit juice concentrate
Glucose

Invert sugar
Lactose
Malt syrup
Maltose
Molasses
Raw sugar
Syrup
Honey

Refined Carbohydrates

White bread, bagels, rolls
Refined (low fiber) cereals
Instant Oatmeal
White Rice, white pasta
Wheat tortillas
Pretzels, potato chips
Pies, cookies, cake
Donuts, pastries

When you do eat sweets and refined carbohydrates, keep the portion small. Have them less often. It helps to eat them with other foods, especially proteins and fats.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Many popular diets talk about glycemic index, which is a measure on how quickly a standardized amount of food raises blood sugar. A more accurate measure is glycemic load, which adjusts for a normal portion size. Scientists question the validity of both tests, mostly because they measure the response from a single food (and when you eat, you usually eat these foods in combination with other foods – which changes the response.) You will notice that I do not exclude foods you may have been warned away from in other sources – because they may have a high glycemic index, but have a normal or low glycemic load.

Choosing Organic: When you choose organic fruits and vegetables, you get less pesticides and are supporting foods grown in ways that support the environment.

Fruit:

All fresh fruits – up to 4 servings a day,
If you are diabetic or have borderline high blood sugar, have only one serving at a time.

A serving is:

- ½ banana
- 1 small apple, orange, pear, peach, plum, etc
- ½ cup unsweetened canned fruit,
- 1 cup strawberries, blueberries, watermelon, other melons
- ½ cup grapes, cherries
- 2 TBSP raisins or dried cranberries

Juices are higher in sugar – limit juice to ½ cup per day and make sure it is 100% juice and not a fruit drink. Canned fruits usually have sugar added.

Vegetables:

All vegetables – the USDA recommendation is 5 servings of vegetables per day!

A serving is considered ½ cup (1 cup of lettuce)

You can have multiple servings of the same thing – for instance a big plateful of broccoli could easily be 2-3 servings. Salads are a great way to load up on vegetables. Use dark lettuce for more nutrition and add lots of chopped up veggies. Top it with dressing made from a heart-healthy oil (see Fats).

Canned vegetables usually have salt added. Fresh and frozen are the best vegetable choices.

Note: in general the more color fruits and vegetables have, the more beneficial nutrients it has. But have variety. Each fruit and vegetable have something a little different, even the lesser colored ones like celery, cucumbers and mushrooms. We keep discovering new nutrients all the time. Fruits and vegetables are powerhouses in the food world.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

The new FDA recommendations call for three glasses a day. There is some controversy around this, and of course if you don't tolerate milk you shouldn't drink it. Milk is a great source of calcium, and people who don't tolerate milk often do tolerate cheese and yogurt. Be aware that some non dairy substitutes have protein (like soy milk) and some don't (like rice milk). If you don't drink milk, consider a calcium supplement.

Dairy and Cheese

Milk: fat-free or 1%; Buttermilk: fat-free or 1%

Soy Milk: plain lowfat (≤ 4 gms fat per serving)

Yogurt: plain fat-free or low fat (regular yogurt is very high in sugar, if you can't eat it plain, try adding your own sugar)

Low-Fat cheeses; String Cheese

Cottage Cheese: fat-free or low-fat; Sour cream: fat free or low fat; Ricotta: low fat

Higher in fat: regular cheeses, regular and 2% milk. Very high in fat and sugar: ice cream.

PROTEIN FOODS

It helps to have some source of protein at most meals. For people with diabetes, it is especially helpful at breakfast. And it tends to give us a feeling of satiety and helps stabilize blood sugars. Choose sources of protein that are lower in fat or contain heart healthy fats (like nuts).

You can get too much protein, which can be hard on the digestive track and kidneys. Excess protein can also cause calcium loss from bones. If the protein comes from meat, it contains saturated fats and can contribute to the hardening of the arteries.

Choose lean meats and limit portion sizes. Because other foods also contain protein, 2-3 oz at both lunch and dinner (5-6 oz total/day) are an adequate amount for most people. A quick visual reference for three ounces of meat is the size of a deck of cards, or the palm of your hand (without your fingers).

Have beans or tofu as a source of protein a couple days a week. Beans are a great source of fiber.

Meats – Poultry

Beef: lean cuts like sirloin, tenderloin, top round, London Broil

Pork: lean cuts like ham, Canadian Bacon, tenderloin

Lamb: lean – cut off visible fat

Poultry: skinless chicken and turkey, ground chicken and turkey

Low Fat Luncheon Meats

Fish

Aim for eating fish 2-3 times a week. It contains omega-3 fatty acids that have beneficial effects on the body. They help lower cholesterol, and they are anti-thrombotic (anti-clotting) and anti-inflammatory. These protect against heart attack, stroke, Alzheimer's, arthritis, and some cancers.

Mercury levels in fish cause a potential risk (weigh this against being a known benefit to the heart)

Here is what you can do:

- Limit yourself to about 12 - 18 oz of fish a week
- Local lakes could have higher mercury content than fish available from stores and restaurants
- Vary the type of fish you eat
- Smaller ocean fish and those lower on the food chain are likely to have less mercury: cod, whitefish, Pollock, mahi-mahi, ocean perch, halibut, haddock, flounder, sole and all shellfish.
- Chunk light tuna is thought to have less mercury than albacore

In my home we love salmon – we buy wild when possible, and have it 2-3 times a month.

Other Protein Foods

Tofu: use soft, low-fat or lite varieties

Legumes: garbanzo, kidney, black and other beans

Eggs, Egg Whites, Egg Substitute

Nuts

Good source of protein, but also high in calories – watch portion size (a handful is a good portion size)

Walnuts are currently at the top of the list for heart healthy benefits, with almonds close behind. A Peanut butter sandwich is great – especially without the jelly and on whole grain bread.

Walnuts are the richest in alpha-linolenic acid (an omega-3 fatty acid good for the heart)

Almonds are richest in calcium and Vitamin E

Brazil nuts are the best dietary source of selenium

Macadamia nuts have the most calories and fat

Chestnuts have the least fat

FATS

Twenty years ago we recommended cutting fats way down. Today's recommendation is more moderate, with recommendations of 30 – 40% of total calories coming from fat. Only 10% of those should come from saturated fats. The less hydrogenated and trans fats the better.

Monounsaturated Fats (or MUFA for monounsaturated fatty acids) are the healthiest for the heart and cholesterol levels. Diets high in MUFA lower the bad LDL cholesterol without harming levels of good HDL cholesterol.

Polyunsaturated Fats – these are good fats, but are omega 6 fats. It is estimated that our diet contains far too many omega 6 fats compared to omega 3's. So monounsaturated fats are favored at this time.

Saturated fats tend to be solid at room temperature. The major sources of saturated fats are butter, lard, ghee, meats (beef, pork, chicken, lamb), and the fat in dairy products.

Hydrogenated fats are vegetable fats that have been made solid artificially. These are common in processed foods and fast foods because it gives foods the properties of a long shelf life. These fats contain trans fatty acids – which are the worst fats for your health. They raise the bad LDL cholesterol and lower the good HDL cholesterol. Processed foods – margarine, snack foods, French-fries, shortenings and baked goods are main sources of trans fats. Beginning January 2006, foods were required to identify trans fats on the label and many foods have already changed their recipes and eliminated trans fats.

Tropical Oils are saturated fats. These include coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil. Tropical oils are the very oils that hydrogenated oils replaced two decades ago because of health concerns. There is a lot of research with these and some people have claimed that they are neutral – they do not impact body chemistry either in good or bad ways. This has not been clearly demonstrated and at this time the recommendation is to avoid them. Palm kernel is the worst of the three. These recommendations could change in the future.

Use these fats:

Monounsaturated oils: more of these

Olive oil
Canola oil
Peanut oil
Olives
Avocado

Polyunsaturated oils: (less in favor now)

Safflower oil
Sunflower oil
Corn oil
Soybean oil
Sesame oil

Nuts and nut butters have some combination of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats

Margarine vs Butter – this is a tough question and continues to be a personal choice. It may depend on how much you use. Butter is a saturated fat. Many margarines contain hydrogenated or trans fats, but there are some better choices out there now. Nutrition Action newsletter suggests looking for only one gram of saturated-plus-trans fat) per tablespoon. Some brands of margarine contain phytosterol's, which can help lower low density lipoprotein (LDL or bad cholesterol). Butter has no trans fats but more saturated fat.

Phytosterols can drop LDL by 10 – 14% with goal of 800 mg of phytosterol per day.

Margarine with phytosterols:

Smart Balance Omega Plus Buttery Spread
Benecol Regular or Benecol Light Spread
Take Control Regular or Light Spread

MISCELLANEOUS

Most herbs and spices are low in calories. Most condiments are fine, but a few are high in sugar content - most notably ketchup, BBQ sauce and cocktail sauce (use these sparingly.)

Spices and Seasoning

All spices that contain no added sugar

Broth

Extracts (almond, vanilla, or others)

Horseradish Sauce

Cooking sprays

Pepper (black, cayenne, red, white)

Mustard

Miscellaneous

Sweet Teas with no sugar added (like Whole Earth Tea)

Chocolate (dark or bittersweet) – sparingly

*Pudding, sugar free

*Candies: hard, sugar-free

*Chocolate Powder, no-added-sugar

Cocoa powder – baking type

*Fudgsicles – no sugar added

*Gelatin – sugar-free

*Gum: sugar free

*Popsicles: sugar-free

*Sugar substitutes

*Diet Soda (I'd suggest limiting)

*There are no clear guidelines on sugar substitute use. Conventional sources feel that they are safe at usual levels. Dr Andrew Weil, who has a more alternative view but still looks at the science, recommends using only natural sweeteners like stevia and tagatose. My observation is that they tend to keep people craving sweets and could trigger a hunger response. I suggest limiting to one or two servings a day if you must, and to skip it if it is not important to you. Experiment – see what works best for you.

A suggestion for sweets: if you really like sweets, try very dark chocolate (72+% cacao). The darker chocolates have more fat and less sugar. If you eat a small portion it can be low in calories but very satisfying, especially if you let it melt in your mouth. There are studies on the anti-oxidant and blood pressure lowering effects of chocolate, but it is unclear how much you have to eat to achieve this. It can be a reasonably healthy way to satisfy a sweet-tooth with a low sugar intake. Get the good, European style chocolates. Look at the label and calculate how many calories per square. Aim for something in the range of 60 – 100 calories.