

Healthy Eating: Tips for Managing Diabetes

Managing diabetes? It's essential to keep your blood sugar level consistent to avoid the big "ups and downs" that can be dangerous. A registered dietitian (RD) or certified diabetes educator (CDE) can help you make a plan for healthy eating and active living, along with medications, if needed.

When it comes to eating, there's no single prescription for blood sugar control. What matters is managing your intake of carbohydrate, protein, fat and calories and controlling your weight. Overweight and obesity increase risk for diabetes and its complications. That said, you don't have to give up favorite foods; instead keep track of the types of foods you eat and learn how to fit them into your daily meal plan.

Whether you use carbohydrate counting or the Exchange System, match your eating plan for diabetes management to your food preferences and lifestyle. If you're overweight, plan for weight loss, too.

Make Carbohydrates Count

Want flexibility or simplicity? Carbohydrate counting lets you map your intake of food and insulin (if you take it) more precisely and adjust, depending on your blood sugar level. This system is like a budget; you get a certain number of carbohydrates per meal and per day and when that number is used up, you're done. That's because carbohydrates affect your blood sugar level more than protein or fat does.

- *Work out a plan.* With your RD, CDE or other health care provider, target carbohydrate amounts for each meal and snack. Track your carbohydrate intake, try to stay consistent and check your blood sugar levels.
- *Make nutrient-rich carbohydrate choices.* Select starchy vegetables, legumes, fruit, juice, milk products and whole-grain and enriched breads and cereals, without too much fat or added sugars.
- *Know carbohydrate facts.* Nutrition Facts on food labels give carbohydrate amounts for labeled serving sizes.
- *Get carbohydrate savvy with unpackaged foods.* In general, a small piece of fresh fruit (apple, banana, orange) counts as 15 grams of carbohydrate; one cup of low-fat milk counts as 12



Pan-Seared Sea Scallops and Green Beans Amandine

grams; one-half cup of cooked or one cup of raw veggies (broccoli, carrots, spinach) counts as 5 grams.

- *Find a book or website with carbohydrate facts.* Figuring carbohydrates in mixed foods, such as lasagna and burritos, takes practice.

Plan the "Exchange" Way

For many, the Exchange System is the "full-service" meal plan approach for managing diabetes. This system puts foods and beverages into 3 main groups and "free foods." These are subdivided into exchange lists, with measured amounts of food supplying similar amounts of nutrients and calories. It's like a "mix-and-match" system for selecting foods.

You and your health care provider make a daily meal and snack plan, specifying the number of servings per exchange list. Then you choose enough food variety, spreading energy-producing foods and drinks throughout your day. With this system, paying attention to portion sizes is a must.

- *Carbohydrate* (Starch, Fruit, Milk, Other Carbohydrates, Vegetables). Go for variety so you aren't short-changed on nutrients. Choose mostly fat-free or low-fat options, as well as those without added sugars. Go easy on Other Carbohydrates (rich desserts, sweets, higher-fat snacks) with few nutrients.
- *Meat and Meat Substitutes* (Very Lean, Lean, Medium-Fat, High-Fat). Choose fish, legumes (beans) and mostly lean or very lean meat and poultry.
- *Fat* (monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, saturated, *trans* fat). Choose mostly vegetable oils, such as olive and canola oils and soft margarine, as well as nuts. Limit intake of saturated and *trans* fats.
- *Free Foods.* Add flavor with very low-calorie or calorie-free foods, as recommended by your health care provider.

Useful Tools

Learn to figure your portions. Misjudging affects not only the carbohydrate, calories and amounts you eat, it also impacts your blood sugar level.

- *Weigh and measure.* Until you are skilled at visual estimates, use measuring cups, spoons and a kitchen scale to determine meal and snack portions. Check yourself every month or so to make sure your estimates stay accurate.
- *Become food label savvy.* Check the number of servings and serving size on the Nutrition Facts label. Since many containers provide more than one serving, do some math. Eating more than one label serving means more carbohydrate, calories and exchanges.

Get Moving ... Another Important Strategy

Active living offers many benefits: 1) as active muscles use glucose, blood sugar levels go down; 2) since regular physical activity helps you manage weight, it also helps with blood sugar control and 3) regular aerobic exercise promotes heart health (important because diabetes significantly increases cardiovascular risk).

- *Devise a physical activity plan with your health care provider.* This includes blood sugar level checks, snack plans and beverage choices, as well as the amount, type and timing of exercise.

- *Check your blood sugar level before exercising.* If it's low, snack first. If it's high, wait until it comes down. At 100 to 150 mg/dL, you can start moving, but snack lightly first, if you'll stay active for 30 minutes or more.
- *Carry a carbohydrate-rich snack or beverage from your meal plan.* Stop to eat it if you feel light-headed. Likely your blood sugar has dropped. Fruit juice, regular soft drinks and sports drinks are fast-acting carbohydrate sources.
- *Take precautions.* Wear diabetes identification, carry a cell phone and get a workout partner who can help if you need it.

Managing your diabetes with prescribed medication, diet and exercise is essential for your good health. Healthy eating and physical activity can benefit everyone in your family, so get them on board, too.

Kraft Healthy Living recipes list both nutrition information and exchanges to help you see how a serving fits into your dietary plan, whether you use carbohydrate counting, exchanges or another system.

Check out this delicious healthy living recipe to determine if it can fit into your healthful eating plan.

Pan-Seared Sea Scallops and Green Beans Amandine

Prep: 10 min. **Total:** 55 min. (incl. marinating) **Makes:** 4 servings

- 1/2 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT! House Italian Reduced Fat Dressing, divided
- 1 lb. sea scallops (about 12 large)
- 1 lb. fresh or frozen green beans
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. dill weed
- 1/4 cup PLANTERS Sliced Almonds, toasted

POUR 1/4 cup of the dressing over scallops in large resealable plastic bag. Seal bag; turn over to evenly coat scallops with the dressing. Refrigerate 30 min. to marinate.

COOK beans in remaining 1/4 cup dressing in large skillet on medium-high heat 5 min. or until crisp-tender, stirring occasionally. Add lemon juice and dill; toss to coat. Cook 1 min., stirring frequently. Sprinkle with almonds. Remove from heat; cover to keep warm.

REMOVE scallops from marinade; discard bag and marinade. Heat large nonstick skillet on medium heat. Add scallops; cook 4 min. on each side or until opaque and lightly browned. Serve with the green beans.

Nutrition Bonus: Trying to get more seafood into your diet? Enjoy this delicious low-calorie, low-fat entree any night of the week.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 230 calories, 7g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 60mg cholesterol, 510mg sodium, 12g carbohydrate, 5g dietary fiber, 5g sugars, 30g protein, 20%DV vitamin A, 10%DV vitamin C, 20%DV calcium, 25%DV iron.

Exchange: 1/2 Starch, 1 Vegetable, 4 Meat (VL), 1 Fat

Dietary Exchanges based on *Exchange Lists for Meal Planning* © 2003 by the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association.