



**Wolverhampton  
Diabetes Care**

## Diet and Diabetes

Just as for everyone else, eating well for people with diabetes simply means having a healthy well balanced diet and being careful about how much you eat and about your weight.

### Why should I be thinking about my diet?

Your diet is important in the care of diabetes, helping strike a balance between what you eat, your level of activity and your treatment. It helps with the control of your blood sugar, with stopping hypos (low blood sugars) from happening, with weight control, with blood pressure and with the prevention of the possible complications of diabetes.

### What simple steps can I take?

Practical steps you can start to make towards a healthier diet are:

- Eat regular meals and have breakfast, a light meal and a main meal each day. You may need to include a between meal and bedtime snack. Your specialist nurse or Dietitian will be able to advise you. Do not miss meals and snacks.
- Include a starchy food at each meal such as bread, cereals, potato, rice, pasta, chapatti, green banana, yam, sweet potato, boiled dumpling.
- Avoid sugar, sugary foods and drinks by choosing low sugar or sugar-free versions. You do not need to worry about the small amount of sugar added to foods such as baked beans, soups and small amounts to tomato ketchup or pickle as this amount should not affect your diabetes control.
- Reduce fat and fatty foods by using less fat in cooking. Cook fresh foods as much as possible and grill, steam, boil or bake foods instead of frying. Cut down on chips, pastries, ready meals, crisps and other savoury snacks.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables and other high fibre foods including whole grain bread and cereals.

### Can I eat all types of fruits and vegetables?

Yes! Eat at least 5 portions a day. Fruit and vegetables are healthy foods and you are encouraged to them. All vegetables can be eaten including root vegetables like carrot, swede, turnip and parsnip. Eat 3 portions of fruit each day and also 2 or more portions of vegetables or salad.

### What is a portion of fruit or vegetable?

Examples of portions are: 2 tablespoons or more vegetables; 1 dessert bowl of salad, 1 medium sized fruit such as apple or banana.; 2 small fruits such as satsumas or plums; 1 slice of a large fruit such as melon or mango; a small handful of grapes; a cupful of berries such as strawberries; 1 dessertspoon dried fruit; you can include one small glass pure unsweetened fruit juice once a day only with meals.

### Should I buy diabetic foods?

No! Special diabetic foods are not recommended. They are expensive, high in calories and will not help your diabetes. They can also give you stomach cramps and diarrhoea. A small amount of sweet food on special occasion will not be harmful to your diabetes if eaten with a meal.

## **What can I drink?**

If you are thirsty drink water or use low calorie, sugar free or diet varieties of other drinks. Avoid sweetened fizzy drinks and squashes and don't take excessive amounts of fruit juice.

## **What about alcohol?**

You can drink alcohol in moderation that is no more than 2 units a day for women and 3 units a day for men. Never drink on an empty stomach. Alcohol is also high in calories and can cause weight gain.

## **What if I am overweight?**

There is no need to go onto special diets or crash diets which can make the rest of your diabetes care difficult. Don't start missing meals as a way of dieting. You should follow the general advice given above. Reduce the overall amount of food you eat at each sitting, change the balance of your food away from fatty foods to healthier food, and take healthy snacks if needed. Remember that increasing your physical activity, together with a change in your diet, will also help.

## **Seeking advice and what care to expect**

When diagnosed, your diet should be talked over with you, and you should get advice to help you to know exactly what to do. You should have more advice and help if and when your treatment changes or if you have problems with blood sugar control, hypos, weight control or blood pressure. Your diet advice should always fit in with any religious or cultural beliefs you have. Your health team will always discuss diet with you if you have concerns and they will be happy to help your partner, parent or family to come to a good understanding too. Changing your diet in a way that suits your lifestyle can be difficult.

You can be referred to a dietitian if you need more help and information.